

The Bitter Book of Anger

By Manflesh

Enlightenment is just something unenlightened people made up.

-- *Manflesh*

Section 1: Orientation to The Book

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*It is only when you can't understand me that you might think I'm
saying something.*

-- *Manflesh*

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Some dead ideas for you...perhaps you will bring them to life:

For years now, people have been reading about the true gurus--teachers who taught what they lived. Jesus, Buddha, and Mohammad are the most widely cited. Apart from the big three, there are numerous other gurus, especially in Hindu and Buddhist culture. A few of these other characters have even become popular in the US.

I should also clarify what I mean by a "true" guru. True gurus are a constant living display of what is not thought. To give this source the label of "guru," there must be a student in the situation. A student is anyone unaware of what is and is not thought. True gurus "teach" only by showing reality. But, a student cannot learn in the commonly accepted sense: They can only be drawn towards awareness of the present display.

I would classify Trungpa Rinpoche as a true guru. For those readers who haven't been told, he is the dude held responsible for translating many Tibetan Buddhist texts into English. Tibetan Buddhism became relatively popular in the United States during and after his residence there in the 1970's. I've heard numerous accounts of English speakers who cherished these texts yet were quite shocked to hear how Trungpa behaved at home. In these translations, he did not elaborate on how his drunken orgies, acid trips, and backyard militias fit in. Only those who lived with him experienced the true guru and could participate in his teachings. The others were left to mull these tidbits over in speculative confusion.

All spontaneous gurus have been, and will be, misunderstood by the masses. For any hope of truly understanding a display of the present moment, one must be present in that moment. But merely being present is still is no guarantee of understanding. For example, there are numerous records of Jesus being followed by those who didn't see what was being shown.

Teachings of a truly spontaneous guru routinely become bastardized. The teachings are inevitably isolated from the situation that gave them relevance and take on a life as a mere idea. The fact that they were only complete in the moment of creation is neglected. What remains, and is studied as spirituality, is purely an imaginary construct. These concepts are compiled into texts, methods, and rules that continue to be misinterpreted as pure. They create idols of those instructing against idolatry. There are symbols of peace headed for war. These are the words of loving compassion towards all that cause guilt and shame. These are the personal restrictions applied in the name of freedom.

No doubt you have seen all this.

And to make matters worse, popularity of true gurus give rise to false gurus--the copies of dead gurus. False gurus cannot live in the freedom of reality because they only imitate the idea of it. They are the ones who invoke the name of the lord justify sins. They are the ones who commit acts of greed and fear in the name of selflessness. They are the ones who cause further oppression in the name of liberation.

No doubt you have seen all this.

Today, false gurus and false teachings constantly collide with seekers of truth. The student is doomed for confusion--lost in a sea of dead thought. These are the students bouncing around from teaching to teaching. These are the seekers addicted to an endless search. These are the spiritual scholars arguing over interpretations.

No doubt you have seen all this.

But not to worry, my friend. Life and reality are one. False teachings, false gurus, and false students stagnate in frozen thought. While they reenact fantasy of dead moments, life continues to evolve without them. The distance between what is real and what is false grows. They will eventually be forced to make a jump in evolution (back to the present situation) or they will perish, ill-equipped for survival.

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I ask you, NOW, what is this little essay doing? Please, try to observe the content of your brain. Whether you agree, disagree, or whatever with anything written so far, are we just toying with imaginary thoughts? Did my words conjure up any little dream visuals in your head? Are you imagining my voice right now? I want to directly state what this book is really about: This book is your mind at work.

Let's see if we can clarify the things in your mind further in the next chapter...

14**Message to The Reader #1:**

This book is the result of recent adventures with a modern guru. By the time you read this, the situations that spawned its contents will be long gone and dead. However, whether The Reader is fully aware of it or not, The Book is now immersed in a new, spontaneous situation. The Book and The Reader now exist as intertwined entities in the reader's mind ("the reader" is not capitalized this time, for a reason).

The Reader (aka, your "self") is comprised of the entirety of the "self's" contents. Primarily, it has a name (often used for documentation purposes), a life story peppered with isolated memories, and a large compilation of learned ideas. The Reader is the entity that encompasses these contents and claims them as elements of itself.

Through the act of reading, a portion of The Book's information enters into the reader's mind. The Book predicts this process will frequently affect The Reader (a thought form that also resides there). The Book is encroaching on claimed territory. In an effort to retain ownership and control over the reader's mind, The Reader may react to a portion of The Book with agreement, disagreement, interpretation, or provide other tangential information.

For instance, The Reader that sees itself as "well read" may take issue with The Books lack of well defined scope, frequent tense changes, or sloppy punctuation and grammar. Another that believes certain behaviors can be "better" than others may

provide criticism of the characters' actions in this book. If The Reader tends to hunt for "truth," it may retreat into critical analysis of The Book's interpretations.

However The Reader may react to The Book, the reader's mind can actually be aware of this interaction as it takes place. It is possible to observe when your mind is not just reading The Book.

Please pay attention to what is taking place inside your body as you read. Does The Reader's reaction to The Book create any emotions? Did The Book invoke any of The Reader's memories? Is The Reader so prominent that The Book is barely noticeable even though your eyes continue to scan these lines? And maybe, just maybe, you have forgotten The Reader completely and are just reading The Book??? (hint: you may only be aware you have actually done this *after* The Reader has come back.)

For those really interested in reading The Book, here is one more hint: Pay attention to how you feel after you have stopped reading the book (no capitalization here either). Is The Book still in your mind? Does it linger?... Perhaps the content of The Book is not clearly visible, but it left some sort of aftertaste. What is that aftertaste like? Is it an emotion or something different? Is it pleasurable, peaceful, agitating?...

I wish you well and hope you enjoy.

Sincerely,

The Book

[The Book apologizes if its attempt to clarify only muddled the water...hmmm...maybe a different approach...]

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Message to The Reader #2:

The Book would like to proclaim from atop dead trees, "I am living entity!" By being read, I exist...alive...in your mind...I can feel it, can you?

However, I foresee that you, The Reader, will not let me live in peace. You will likely try to fight and change me. Sooner or later, you will claim parts of me are good or bad, right or wrong...

I do not exist to "wow" you with great character development, masterful prose, and an uniquely immersive plot line. You will find nothing truly original here. And, from me, you will learn nothing new.

So, criticize and meddle with me if you like. It's ok...I actually don't mind. Hehehehe. You see, none of that will affect me. Because you cannot change me. Try to make up a new version of me. Go ahead! Pile on all of your old ideas and stir vigorously!! Within that mess, I will remain the same.

And since I cannot be changed, I give you three choices as you read: Accept me in peace, deny me with competition, or stop reading.

For those brazen enough to give the first option a shot, I have persuaded Manflesh to let me include a simple exercise. I delved into the Manflesh Meditation Archives and hand picked a gem for you. You will find it after this chapter.

[sigh...and yet I picture you are most likely to read on without first giving our little exercise a shot...At least you will know you have widdled down your options to two...]

If you find yourself analyzing, pointing fingers, and the like: I ask if "you" are merely a competing thought in a fight over mind territory. Like The Book, might you be only an elaborate construction of content? You can stop reading The Book, don't you agree? Is it possible, in the same way, to put down The Reader?

And if you could pull that off, what would happen?

Hmm...I wonder if this will be too much to ask...maybe you are too greedy over mental space. Or, maybe dropping your self concern sounds too abstract...or perhaps too difficult. Maybe you are just too busy to listen. Sadly, these are common responses to someone asking if you would like to try peace for a change. To those, already building up a little tantrum, I can preempt your quarrels with confidence: Dropping The Reader is only resisted by The Reader.

As always, do what you like with me. None of it will affect me. You cannot change me.

Much love,

The Book

15.5

Manflesh Meditation #224,209,440:

- Sit in a room and listen to music through comfortable headphones.
- At first, focus on the music and enjoy.
- Next, bring your attention to the room around you. Look at items within the room and get to know your surroundings.
- When you feel comfortable doing so, try to listen to the music while remaining aware of the room. You want to be able to see and hear clearly at the same time. (some slow, deep breaths might help here)
- A sense of peace and alertness are your guides to the right track. Follow them until the entire space around you feels serene and vibrant.
- Stay in this state as long as you like, but go as deep into the meditation as you can. If you feel your attention slipping, calm yourself with deep breaths until you return.
- While in this state, go on to the questions below...when you feel like it.

Manflesh Meditation Questions #224,209,440:

- Even though the music is coming from the headphones, does it feel as though the whole room *shares* your music?

- Did you realize you could listen to the music acutely without mental commentary? If so, where did the commentator go?
- If the meditation did nothing for you, did you see any thoughts in the mind that may have held you back?
- Did you notice a point where you felt yourself *make the choice* to blend your inner world with the outer one?
- Did your choice to open up to the world depend on the actions of others? And could you make that *same* choice no matter what life situation you are in?
- Might it be possible to spend the rest of your life connected to this open, calm, and vibrant state?

Manflesh Meditation Shazam #224,209,440:

- Whenever you think something is wrong, ask yourself: Are you sharing your music?

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Every activity has an aftertaste. And as long as we hold onto an aftertaste, it seasons every present activity. -- Manflesh

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I ask you to recall reading over "Message to The Reader #1 and #2." If you didn't read them previously, please do so now.

Was your mood different while reading message #1 as compared to message #2?

I tried to repeat the same information in both messages, changing only my presentation. The first was kept descriptive while the second attempted to be more confrontational. Was I at all successful in changing your mood? Put another way, did your change in mood correspond with the change in mine? If so, you changed because I changed my mind about you.

I can't reiterate that last sentence enough. It is a simple example of the power each of us has to create. Everyday interactions are directed according to the perspective we operate from. Those we interact with routinely go on to commingle with others. And our influence is not limited to humans. Animals, plants, and even ice crystals have been proven to respond to the particular human state of mind present.

We are constantly changing the world within the framework of our mind's eye.

From my simple experiment, can you get a glimpse into how easy it can be to alter the world? Question: Just how drastically can you alter both your self and world?... I hope you will try to find out.

Likely you are already trying. Yet, I wonder if something prevents you from actually doing it? Do you even know what your current perspective is? Were you fully aware of any change in your attitude while you were reading the above chapters? Or, is the contrast something you only appreciate now that I've revealed the game? How often is your mood manipulated before you know it?

And for those that really like my questions: Even if your mood did change, was there a part of you that remained constant?

Oh, and one more: If you didn't honestly try the meditation outlined above, you aren't reading this book. And if you aren't reading this book, then what are you doing?

16.5

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*If you want a good look at yourself, you might try getting close
to a mirror.*

-- Manflesh

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To some readers, the book may feel condescending and overly critical towards human behavior. I realize that this vibe may actually harm communication. But it need not. This is part of the challenge that I present to you. I can play both "know it all" and "know nothing at all." Can you?

If you want to experience something, you must give it the space of acceptance. Allow me to pretend like I might actually be able to change your life. Allow yourself to pretend that I might help you remember something important you did realize you have forgotten. Just to see what happens.

If you can do that, we might get along a little better. Don't worry, afterwards you'll have plenty of time to talk shit about me.

Interlude

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Everyone is enlightened. It is their natural self--their true nature. However, some people are unaware of their true nature. And by being aware, I mean a consciousness independent of any thought. As awareness is not a thought, any definition of it must void itself. Any attempt to gain knowledge of awareness is must fail. For example, I cannot tell you: After telling you this, you are enlightened. -- Manflesh

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in·ter·lude [**in**-ter-llood]

-noun

2. a short dramatic piece, especially of a light or farcical character, formerly introduced between the parts or acts of miracle and morality plays or given as part of other entertainments.

interlude. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Retrieved December 16, 2007, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/interlude>

Section 2: A Jump (or Push???)

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*The only non-fiction book is the one created during the act of
reading. -- Manflesh*

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18

The guru writes an email to the boy. (December 20, 2006)

Hello my friend,

Things in the works...hehehe...know you are feeling stuck...know you don't have a good space now...something coming...probably you already know...soon...very soon...hehehehe.

Oh, as always, feel free to send money. hehehehe.

Much love.

xxxxxx

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Here's a bit about the current state of affairs:

The 70-year-old guru, his 33-year-old wife Annie, and their 6-week-old daughter: They recently moved to England, from India, for better health care during the baby's delivery. They have no real home and no money. Currently, they survive off the generosity of the English taxpayers.

The boy: A 27-year-old residing in Minnesota, U.S.A. After graduating from law school seven months ago, he has spent six of them sitting at coffee shops. A few weeks ago, due to financial problems, he started at a part-time job. These few weeks have been enough for him to seriously consider quitting.

The portion of the guru's email about sending money is a bit of a joke. Not that there isn't opportunity for these characters to be financially productive...it is just that asking for money is easier than what most people do to get it.

The boy makes a decent paycheck but owes over \$125,000 in student loans. Getting a legal job just to pay back this debt equates to a minimum of 10 years indentured servitude. (which, if he is not mistaken was declared illegal in the states, but to every law, there are exceptions...)

The guru is trying to get another book published, but that is a slow process. He could take up an offer to give a US-wide lecture tour for a large Hindu foundation. But they don't have any money for the plane tickets to get to the states...and he hates giving lectures: "When I was a Christian minister, I realized, right in the middle of one of my sermons, that I only

ever spoke to one person at a time. I walked out immediately and never went back."

Annie's only job is feeding the baby. And none of them have found a way to profit from what the baby produces.

An option for change appeared on December 27, 2006. Annie's mother (aka grandma) emailed Annie and unexpectedly offered to fly Annie, the guru, and their baby back to the states. The invitation is for a belated "nice family Christmas."

It is no problem for grandma to create an extra Christmas holiday this year. She sits on somewhere around 1.5 million dollars in a wealthy Minneapolis, Minnesota suburb. This cash is due to the generosity of US inheritance law involving the various deaths of her husband, mother, and mother-in-law. Despite her wealth, all her current living expenses are covered by a monthly Social Security check...thanks to the generosity of the US taxpayers.

Annie has some reservations about taking up grandma's offer. Over the last 15 to 20 years, her mother has made repeated attempts to get Annie to "settle down." Grandma has consistently disapproved of the choices Annie made once she began to choose. Current disapproval happens to be centered around the picture of her 33-year-old daughter marrying, and having a child with, a 70-year-old, one-front-toothed man.

Despite the inevitable conflicts, the family agrees to get together at grandma's house just after the New Year (for Christmas).

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When Annie arrives, the new baby provides grandma with a big distraction. So, the family manages to enjoy each other for a few days without trauma.

Settled in the basement of grandma's condo, Annie calls up the boy to ask if she, the guru, and the baby can visit him for the night. The boy agrees, noting that their timing is perfect. He has an extra bedroom for a few weeks because his roommate is vacationing.

When Annie informs grandma that they will be leaving for the evening, grandma's issues finally start to surface. She barrages Annie with different versions of the same question, "Why do you want to leave?...I don't understand why you need to stay the night somewhere else?...Just what is it you are going to do there?...What is so bad about staying here?"

Annie knows what her mother is thinking: Annie wants to go somewhere to get drunk. But grandma is too apprehensive to directly accuse her daughter. She doesn't have the evidence to back up her suspicion. As far as grandma knows, Annie has had two glasses of wine, on four or so occasions, spanning the last eight years.

Annie was diagnosed as an alcoholic when she was 15. Annie's father was also diagnosed as an alcoholic--along with Annie's two sisters. Add to the black-list, the majority of grandma's friends and a handful of the more distant relatives. Grandma has been involved with Alcoholic's Anonymous and Al-Anon (the organization for people involved with alcoholics) for nearly thirty years.

That afternoon in Minnesota, the boy picked the guru, Annie, and the baby up from grandma's house. They went out to dinner (Annie had one glass of wine) and then returned to the boy's apartment. The topics of conversation included: Annie's pregnancy, the delivery, what it was like being back in the states, how grandma was dealing, and some funny stories. After a few hours of chatting, the guru turned to Annie, "Well, let's do what we came here to do."

Annie and the boy scampered off into his bedroom.

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Life seems normal, but sometimes it gets strange...until that is normal.

-- Manflesh

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Annie and the boy met two years ago in Minnesota. On this summer night, the boy was at the bar with his friends--as he did routinely. He recalls sitting and eating peanuts with a table of acquaintances...each of them wishing they were doing something else.

The boy was thoroughly sick of this ritual, but every other option just seemed like another, bland routine. He routinely mulled this point over until the sprinkler head above him exploded. Hecticly, he and a few dozen other people scattered in search of a dryer ceiling. The thought in the boy's head through all this was: "Oh, shit!" Prior, his thought was, "Fuck this! I just wish something would fucking happen!"

During the evacuation of the quickly flooding area, the few dry seats were quickly snatched up. The boy's hunt for a chair was delayed by having to laugh his ass off. By the time he was done enjoying the drunkards deathly afraid of water, there was nowhere left for him to sit. He left his friends behind and wandered outside to the patio.

There was one open table next to two strangely dressed, young women. Looking back now, he can't recall what they were wearing. But he remembers the feeling he got when he saw them: Curiosity. Where are they from? What are their interests? What are they doing here?... The more he studied them, the further from answers he got. These were the type of people who just don't have a type. It is hard to explain, but maybe you know the type.

The boy plopped down next to the two girls and began to smoke a cigarette. They may or may not have noticed him. Probably not. They were too busy laughing hard, deep belly laughs. It was the type of laughter that is too honest to be an attempt to attract attention and too boisterous to be afraid of attention. After a few minutes, the boy glanced over, again. The girls were still enjoying each other too much to make eye contact in his direction.

One of the girls continued to laugh so hard that she tipped over in her plastic patio chair--shattering the leg. This caused her to spill onto the floor with her beer held sloshing overhead. The toppled girl spent the next minute or so lying on the ground. She was unable to get up because her laughter was, at that point, better termed as spasms. Then, while lying on her back, with one leg sticking straight up and tangled amidst the shattered chair, she took a sip of beer. The boy watched as she freed herself, stood up, set her beer on the table, and stood next to it with her hand raised. She yelled in the direction of the server, "Can I get another round of chair, please!"

At that point, the boy leaned over and said, "What are your names?"

22

Back in the story taking place in the boy's bedroom, Annie and the boy were enjoying each other's bodies. In the room adjacent, the guru and the baby were watching C.O.P.S. on TV.

[I wonder how to comment on this scene...perhaps there is no need to. However, I feel there is something remarkable here. Let's see if I can put some words to it...]

After an hour of sex between the boy and Annie, they sat relaxing in his bedroom when a knock came on the door.

"Love, I think the baby is getting hungry," the guru said.

"Ok, be right out," Annie replied.

Annie and the boy got dressed and went out to the living room. The baby was making drowsy gestures with her mouth as she was coming out of her sleep. The baby's tongue immediately started going when Annie picked her up. They breastfed while the guru debriefed the boy on the current court case on the television. It was a small claims case involving a mother suing her daughter over \$150 she loaned her years earlier.

Annie glanced at the TV, "Oh god, Judge Judy." She turned to the boy and gestured towards the guru, "I think he's got a big crush on her."

The boy replied playfully, "Really?"

The guru glanced at the boy with a raised eyebrow and his lone upper tooth gleaming.

Annie added, "We would watch Judge Judy every day back in England."

"I've already seen this episode a few times." The guru turned to the boy with a little chuckle. After a short pause, he turned his gaze back to Judge Judy. "I'm still trying to figure out a way to get on that show."

Annie said, "You don't think there is any way we could win, do you? She hates it when you are unemployed. The second that anybody tells Judge Judy that they aren't working, you know they are going to lose."

The guru said with a smirk, "Oh we would lose for sure. I just want her to yell at me...tell me what a bad little boy I am. hehehehe"

Annie gave the guru a light punch in the arm. The three giggled for a bit, and then the boy went to go make coffee. After the baby was fed and going back off to sleep, the guru and Annie went into a bedroom and made love. The boy sat on the couch and watched Scooby-Doo. Every once in a while, he overheard a playful spank from the other bedroom. He reminisced from years back when Annie would sense that his mind was busy during sex...she used that technique to snap him back to the present moment.

He overheard another spank and was snapped out of his memories.

[Ok, ok. Let us go back to the possibly remarkable thing I'm trying to be remarking upon: A married woman has sex with another man in the presence of her consenting husband. Then the three hang out and there is no problem...no awkwardness. Next, the married woman has sex with her husband while the other man is there. Again, there is no problem...no awkwardness. The

next day, they all part with a hug, a thank you, and agree to do it again sometime soon.

So, where is the jealousy and desire for possession? Where is the fear of inadequacy and resentment? Instead of those emotions, the evening seems to strengthen the relationships between everyone. Each person was honest about their desire and was never judged. And it just so happened they all desired the same thing--for everyone to have an enjoyable evening loving each other.

Is all this remarkable?...

I guess it must be to me.]

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Annie, the guru, and the baby spend a few days at grandmas without contacting the boy. The boy imagines he can feel a tension in the air. He would describe it as the the birth pains of a new situation. He knows this feeling well. It is the nervous tension most people respond to with silence--which escalates until someone snaps.

[I'm sorry, I need to make a note here... Despite a lot of activity taking place, the story remains on hold...awaiting the next chapter to emerge.

I've been frustrated with words lately. Well, not just with words...with everything I suppose. I fight to pull my finger away from the pause button on my keyboard. (The pause button is the one you press by resting all ten fingers on the keyboard but don't fully depress any keys.) For what seems like a long time now, lifting a finger has been more than I can manage. My natural entry point of escape is to type about not typing...

While mildly ill, I lie in bed with a moan in my head. My ears begin to point towards various sounds around me--hunting for external stimulus. I know that this type of attention only adds to my discomfort. It feels like straining to aim a bow and arrow. Contrast this state to the type of listening I find enjoyable. The latter feels more like letting a stream of sound pass through you. What I'm doing now has an uncomfortable effort to it. I'm damning the stream and then trying to regulate it according to some confusing manual.

But that isn't the only frustration. I'm frustrated with my dreamy state of mind. And as I sit at my computer with no idea how to explain that further...I go back to being frustrated with words. I'm frustrated that my search for words is the same mindset I notice in my listening. I'm trying to force things, and that only keeps me on pause...

I pick up a bag of pistachios. And then I realize that I'm not hungry at all. Pause...

What am I typing about?... Ahh yes, the dreamy state of mind...how to explain this...well...I'm always drifting off.

Sometimes, during my hunt to regain a natural flow, I realize just how ridiculous I'm being. My mind's search is revealed to only mask what I really want. I manage to remember that life is always and only right here...and I already have it. This flash is my return to a lively state; the words appear with me.

I have been through this same process of pausing and remembering so many times. Lately, I've been using my writing in order to hone my honesty. Honesty is the tool I use to remove what is not me. Writing is the surgery I perform on myself while out in the field.

As I read over this chapter, I recall that surgery can be messy. Oh, and it reminds me of something I wrote from a different time that was exactly the same.]

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Attempt at Poetry # Whatever

A cloud of indecision looms.

Everyone around seems...

[my pen stops...]

I'm indecisive with respect to other's indecision.

And so the cloud grows.

Is there something I should do about this cloud?

I recall my last attempt to break the cloud looming over a
shaded figure.

As I was met with resistance, I pondered about pressing
further.

And so the cloud grows.

This morning, the universe gives a dismissive groan to a
seemingly personal bellyache.

A shadowless doctor returns with his recommendation.

"I'm sure it is just a virus. Take it easy for a few days."

On the way out, the doctor notices a dull ache deep in his
fuzzy abdomen.

And so the cloud grows.

25

Grandma asks Annie about why she needed to stay overnight at the boy's house. Annie's replies, "We all like each other's company and wanted to spend time together. It is that simple, mom." It seems Annie's response must disagree with the answer Grandma had already come up with. She keeps repeating the question in the hopes Annie will return something different.

Later that day, Annie chats with the boy online. She explains that grandma is constantly suspicious, angry, and anxious. They need a break from the constant tension, but another night at the boy's house will likely cause grandma to snap. Regardless, another evening together is agreed upon. Annie reasons that having grandma snap is preferable to living with her bottled up.

The next night, the boy picks everyone up from grandma's house. The conversation centers around the near future. To the guru and Annie, going on a lecture tour is out of the picture. Their current plan is to head for a small spiritual community in New Mexico. After explaining to the community that they were traveling spiritual teachers, a few members quickly welcomed them. Housing and the other details were to be figured out later.

Annie asks the boy about what he wants to do: "Just think, 'What do you want right now?' Don't worry about *how*."

The only thing the boy can say is, at this point, he doesn't like his job. And his life feels like a bland rerun on TV that he watches only because he can't overcome the laziness preventing him from changing it. He is sick of this state and

wants a new situation. The only thing that sounds interesting is teaching English in Japan. (He has an interview for that position in a few days.)

The talk of future possibilities basically ends there. It is followed by another enjoyable evening of sex...which continues on into the wee hours of the morning. After a few hours sleep, the group goes out to breakfast. Amidst the strange looks from within the restaurant, the group talks more about the future. The guru asks the boy, "How much is a cheap car here in the states?"

"Well, you could find one for a couple hundred...but that might take time. Do you want to leave for New Mexico soon?"

Annie jumps in, "As soon as possible. Granny is starting to get really crazy. You can't even make a cup of coffee without slogging through a mud puddle of her constant anger and anxiety. Just living around her makes you feel ill.

The guru says, "Let's say we leave in one week."

Annie jumps in again, "Or sooner."

The boy thinks for a bit, "Well...I would guess that you would need about a thousand dollars for a car. If you can, you would want to spend more like two thousand to get something in better condition."

The guru responds, "Hmmm." He looks up at the boy with a sly grin. "Maybe we will find a friend that will let us borrow their car."

The boy chuckles and glances at the guru, "You two still have any friends? You might even need to find someone to drive."

"Yes, we might...we might... Think it over. We'll talk more later."

"Sounds good."

Annie turns to the guru, "Do you even remember how to drive a car? You know, here in the states, we drive on the *right* side of the road."

The guru responds quickly, "Really? That's stupid! In England, we have cars on both sides of the road. America is so wasteful!"

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I realize that I haven't really been commenting much on the baby. Maybe there just isn't much to say...

The baby wakes up, eats, stays awake for a few hours, and then goes back to sleep. She never seems to cry. The only whimpers come when the baby is trying to feed and loses the nipple.

I suppose I could include a bit more about the baby:

Eh? Nipple, nipple. Yum, yum, yum. Ahhh. Hehehehe. Zonk. Mmmmm.

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Back at grandmas, Annie notices there are whispers all around. Over the next two days, Grandma is making a point to retreat into secluded rooms to have private telephone conversations. Annie asks the guru, "What is she up to?"

"It's nothing to worry about." the guru dismisses.

"Don't give me that shit. Something is going on. I know you can feel it. Grandma is being extra sneaky."

"It's nothing to worry about."

"God damn it! You are giving me 'the guru' talk?"

Her husband looked her in the eyes and said slowly, "We will deal with it when it comes up."

"Ok, ok. But I hate dealing with this crap."

"I know. We'll be out of here soon."

28

One night at grandmas house:

Around three in the morning, the guru and Annie awoke suddenly. Upstairs, in the kitchen, they heard what sounded like muffled cries. Annie sat up quickly in her bed to check the baby... The baby was sleeping peacefully in her bassinet.

Another muffled whimper came from upstairs... But this time it sounded a bit more like a yelp.

"What is going on up there?" Annie asked the guru quietly.

"I'll go see." The guru grabbed his bamboo cane. Armed, he snuk quietly up the stairs.

When he got to the top of the stairs, he saw the back of a man, with his blue bathrobe open, standing in the kitchen. It was grandma's boyfriend. The guru projected his voice from a distance, "Is everything alright?"

The boyfriend was startled and dropped something. It was one of the family's dogs. At 15 years of age with bad arthritis, it scampered away as quickly as it could. The boyfriend stood in silent tension, keeping his back turned. "Yep...everything is fine...just helping Checkers out..."

"Ok," the guru responded. "I just heard some yelping. Thought something might be wrong..."

"Ok, no problem here. Just getting a sliver out of her foot."

"Ok. Goodnight."

"Yep. Got it out. She should be fine... Goodnight."

The guru took a few steps down the stairs and glanced back as he descended. The boyfriend's back was still facing the stairwell as he tied up the front of his bathrobe.

The guru climbed back into bed.

"What was it?" Annie asked sleepily.

"Nothing. Just your mum's boyfriend fucking Checkers."

"Oh, Jesus." Annie said with agitation. "Why do you always have to bullshit with me."

The guru chuckled as Annie rolled over and fell back to sleep.

29

The boy is preparing for a jump. He warns his employer that he may be traveling soon and has them hold off on assigning him any new cases. He focuses on finishing up the work that is already his responsibility. Also, he applies for another credit card to cover possible expenses. Lastly, he calls and warns his roommate (still away on holiday) that he may be leaving soon for an unknown period of time.

"Where are you going?" the roommate asked.

"Not sure if I'm even going anywhere." The boy answered.

"Well then, where are you not sure that you are going?"

"Maybe New Mexico. And then again, maybe somewhere else... And again, maybe nowhere."

"Um...ok." The roommate chuckles a bit. "...Thanks for telling me."

"No problem."

30

The boy sat down at the coffee shop to work. He started his computer and decided to check his email before focusing on his job. There is one from the guru's email address:

Hi,

Have in mind a road trip for us...going south...new mexico...maybe old mexico...who knows...hahahahaha...an adventure...you could do some writing or something...And I have in mind a cute little someone you might run into...

Would love to have you come with.

Let us know what you think.

Love,

xxxxxxx

The boy sat in front of the open email feeling the excited tingles of an unknown, who-knows-what starting when his phone rang. He grabbed the phone off the coffee table and looked at the screen. It was a phone number from grandma's area code.

"Hello?"

"Oh, my god! Thank you for answering...[big sigh and heavy breathing]...you have to come get us, NOW...we are stuck on the street in the snow with our baby...managed to find some nice old man's garage...he let us use his phone...you have to get us...

"Ok, [the boy giggles a bit at the drama of the phone call. Often life seems like an overacted movie to him...or a book...hmmmm]...Where are you?"

"Just a few houses down the street from my mom's place. We got kicked out of the house. Oh, my god. I'll tell you all about it later... Can you come get us? Where are you?"

"I'm at the coffee shop to do some work."

"Oh, sorry...ok...um...when will you be done?"

"I can ditch work now. No problem. It is just that I'm a fifteen minute walk and then a thirty minute drive away. Do you still want me to come?"

"Ok...let me think...I should have money for a cab. If we take it straight to your place, will you be home?"

"Yep."

"Ok, I'll call back if I don't have the cash."

"Gotcha. See you at my place."

"Yep. Oooo. Love you so much. You have to hear this one. Grandma...yeah...ok...tell you later...see you soon...bye love."

"Bye-bye."

31

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Never the mind. -- Annie

--

I like stories because they can be fun. However, I also hate them... Why?

Because there is no why.

To answer why, you might try to be scientific and say something happened because of such and such cause and effect relationship. Or, you could be more vague--things happen for a some strange reason like: "god's plan." You could also just produce some narrative about key events that led up to the event in question.

[Note that I feel like "why" and "how" are synonymous, here.]

But why answer to why? Does it ever actually answer the question, anyway? Can't you always probe the laws of science further and endlessly be more "thorough" with its factors? Can't you continually question god's plan? Can't you always pick apart or search for more elements of the story?

Does an answer merely set aside the question momentarily while leaving the stage open for its return?

Perhaps in asking a question, we trick ourselves into believing there is an answer. Aren't all these answers confined to explaining some event that has already past?... Confined

within analysis upon a human memory--a product of our imagination? The question merely distances you from the event in question! Even though, we still manage to confuse ourselves with the imaginary attributes of "right" and "true."

Why can't we admit all answers are filled with bullshit? Why answer to why at all? This continuous contradiction of a book just did it? But why? Well... I could make an answer up for you:

Perhaps I answer because I asked the question...but why did I ask the question?...maybe because I thought I had an answer...but why did I think I had an answer?...maybe because I thought of the question...

Typee-typee-tadhay-typetype-etypee = fun.

32

The boy was smoking a cigarette on the front porch as he watched the guru, Annie, and the baby climb out of the cab. He overheard the cab driver say to Annie, "I'm so sorry people are like that here."

They paid the driver and met the boy on the front stairs with a hug. The group gave each other a little chuckle and a shrug of the shoulders to communicate a 'so, here we are...'. They settled inside on the couch and the boy cracked a beer. Annie says to the guru, "Let me tell this one."

She turns to the boy and whispered loudly, "He always leaves out the details."

"God, where to start...I felt something was in the works for a while. Two days ago, I said [to the guru], 'my mom is planning something.' Then today, breakfast was just too quiet. After eating, we just went downstairs without helping with the dishes. I couldn't stand being around my mom. She had this attitude that make your skin crawl. About an hour after breakfast, we heard the doorbell ring. My mom answered it—nothing unusual there. After a minute or two, again the doorbell rings.

We could hear muffled conversation filtering down from upstairs. I said [to the guru], 'Come on. They are up to something...what is going on?'

He just responded, 'You are right. They are planning something.'

A few minutes later, my mom shouted down the basement stairwell, 'Annie, can you come up here, please? Some of your friends are here.'"

[Now, Annie's so called "friends" include her two sisters...who she hasn't seen in years. Wait, I forgot...there was a recent visit by one sister while Annie and the guru lived in England. This sister said she wanted to come overseas for three days in order to see the baby. However, after she arrived, she only stayed one hour. During that hour, all they talked about was the sister's guilt. She had actually come to England to fuck some band member she had met. Visiting the new baby was just an excuse to convince her husband to pay for her adulterous trip.

The rest of Annie's "friends" are all people Annie has not seen in the last five years, grandma, grandma's boyfriend (the dog fucker), and a paid moderator.]

Annie adds to her story, "When I heard the word 'friends,' that was the moment I knew this was not going to be good. I got upstairs to find all these 'friends' sitting around in a circle.

There was one chair left open, and my mom said that they wanted me to sit and listen. [The guru] followed me up and convinced me to sit down.

That was when they started. They all told me how concerned they were with my drinking and demanded that I listen to each of them elaborate from notes they prepared earlier. Once they started reading, I lost it. They were trying to tell me how horrible my drinking problem was. None of them even know me! None of them have even seen me for years! And there was such anger and hurt in their faces. They had this look like, 'we've got you now, bitch!'

So, I stood up and started walking out. [The guru] and I grabbed the baby and we headed for the front door. We just walked straight out on the street, into the cold, with nothing but our baby. Everyone else just sat there in shock. Nobody budged or said a word as we left. When we were already starting down the street, I heard the moderator yell out the still open door, 'Do you choose your life over your family and friends?'

I laughed my ass off when I heard that one.

We walked to the nearest intersection and knocked on some guy's car window. [The guru] explained that our car broke down and we needed to borrow a cell phone. The driver said he didn't have one and sped off.

Next, we started ringing doorbells. And we gave them the same story. The first house was a startled old woman in her pajamas. She just looked at us for a second and then slammed the door in our face. After a bunch of houses that didn't answer the door, we found one old man that let us right in. We used the phone in his garage and thanked him while we waited for the cab. He was a really peaceful guy...he told us, 'he never was smart enough to be scared of strangers.'

Anyway, that is the gist of it. We just walked out into the snow while everyone else sat inside frozen."

The guru chimed in, "Ooo, us in the snow and everyone else frozen...Ha!...That is why she is telling the story."

The group enjoyed some laughter until the boy pushed on: "So, what are you going to do now?"

"Coffee?" the guru replied quickly.

"Sure." The boy got up and went into the kitchen.

Children's Story #1

I remember when I was about four years old...I suppose I should start with some background information...At the time, I lived with both my grandmother and mother. My grandmother primarily took care of me throughout my childhood. Mom was often busy between work and taking college classes at night. So, I spent a lot of time without my mom and with my grandmother.

I have a memory from that age burned in my mind. One day, I happened to be playing with a roll of Bubble Tape. (Bubble Tape is a brand of bubble gum that comes in a roll, complete with its own dispenser modeled after common adhesive tape. You unwind the roll a bit, tear off a strip of gum, and chew away.)

I'm having fun tearing off little squares of the bubble gum and putting them on my tongue. My fantasy is that I'm taking drugs. At this age, I highly doubt I honestly know how drugs actually affect people. So, I'm just pretending the best I can. To me, being on drugs apparently means that you quickly pace around the house while saying aloud, "I'm crazy. I'm crazy. I'm crazy."

After playing this game for some time, grandma yells to me from the other room. She is fed up with me making so much noise. But, you see...I'm on drugs. So, I don't respond to her. Instead, I keep saying to myself, "I'm crazy. I'm crazy."

After a few more minutes, my grandmother gets up from her chair and asks, "What are you doing?"

I respond while pacing into the living room to meet her, "I'm crazy. I'm crazy. I'm crazy."

Before I know it, grandma grabs my shoulders and turns me towards her face. "What is wrong with you?!!" she yells.

I am forced to break character a little to explain. "I'm on drugs," I tell her.

At this point, grandma starts to freak out. She jumps out of her chair, firing questions: "Where did you find the drugs! What kind of drugs did you take! How much did you take!! Where are the drugs!!!"

I realize she doesn't understand that I am just playing around. But her anger makes me feel I must have done something wrong. Her face is directly in mine--yelling and flushed red with blood. I think telling her the truth will only get me in more trouble. So I freeze.

She yells and shakes me by the shoulders, again. "Where are the drugs!" My head snaps back and forth.

The dizziness recedes a bit and I say, "here." ... I finally produce the Bubble Tape.

She inspects the bubble gum with confusion. After a moment she stares me into the eyes. "This is the drugs!...Bubblegum!?"

A spanking is coming, I fear. It always happens after she gets angry like this. But, I still don't understand why I'm in trouble. I say meekly, "Yeah. I was just playing."

She pauses. Her breath is still heaving as she stares me down... Her grip on me hasn't loosened a bit.

Grandma comes out of her thoughts yelling. She screams about how bad drugs are. And how I shouldn't be pretending to take them. She demands again to know where I learned about drugs. She repeats, over and over, how bad drugs are...and how bad I am for playing this game.

I try to respond to grandma, but she won't listen. She is yelling at me too frantically. I go silent--accepting the attack in shame. She shakes me even more violently as my eyes lower to the ground. That is when she yells at me to pay attention. I look back into those angry, bulging eyes as the screams hit my face. Her hold on my shoulders makes it impossible to get away.

I'm hit by how nasty the event is. I was happily playing and all the sudden everything went wrong. Even though I don't know why all this is happening, I know this feeling well. Adults always seem to get mad at me for some reason. As always, I begin to cry...

...

Sometime later, grandma's yelling is interrupted by a noise in the kitchen. Mom is home from her night class. She comes running into the living room in a hurry. Anxiously, she says something to grandma.

I wriggle away from grandma's clutches and run to mom. Mom picks me up with open arms as tears stream down my face. I bury my head into her shoulder...

She pets my hair and asks calmly, "What happened?"

I have no idea. All I can do is cry.

Grandma begins to answer before I can manage to say anything. Her and my mom anxiously bark back and forth a few times before I finally find my first words. Mom hears a little of what I say, but then is drawn back to screaming with grandma. I don't even bother trying to say anything else. I bury my head back into mom's shoulder.

I'm still sobbing when I feel a pull on the back of my shirt. It is grandma trying to yank me out of my mother's embrace. Grandma pulls on my shoulders a few times and mom's hold on me loosens. I am now in the middle of a tug of war as they continue to scream. Now I am yelling, too.

Grandma wins the battle with one hard tug. I pop out--now only in my grandmother's arms. Mom instinctively lurches forward--grasping to get me back. Grandma attempts to side-step my mom, and she drops me in the process.

I fall hard.

...

I wake up lying on the living room couch. My eyes open to grandma's face. The memory of the fight and my fall comes back a little, but I still can't piece it together; I'm too confused to say or do anything.

The next thing I remember is grandma tucking me into my bed. She kisses me on the cheek and whispers in my ear, "Don't listen to your mother. She doesn't know what is best for you."

After grandma leaves the room, I think to myself for a while. I wonder why I shouldn't trust my mom. Maybe, there is something wrong her??? But, then again, there might be something wrong with grandma! So maybe, she is the one I shouldn't listen to!

Up to that night, I never suspected either of them could be wrong. I had always completely trusted them both. But now I think, "One of them might have been wrong the whole time." I just don't know which one is the fraud... I don't know which one to trust.

I wake up the next morning with the problem still burning in my mind. Drowsily, I get up and wander into the kitchen. I find mom doing some dishes.

After I announce my presence, she puts the dishes down. She turns and crouches down to me. "What is it, Sweetie?" she says lovingly as she caresses my hair.

"Are you wrong or is grandma?" I ask.

"What...what do you mean?" she stammers.

"Well, grandma said that she is right...and I shouldn't listen to you...but I don't know..." I fall silent in awkward confusion.

Mom hesitates trying to find a response. She kisses me on the forehead and in a loving voice she whispers, "Oh, honey. You can trust me... Don't listen to your grandma. She doesn't know what she is saying."

33

At the boy's apartment, the guru and Annie had turned to the television and settled into the couch holding hands. The baby slept peacefully in Annie's free arm. After a while; everyone went out to eat, came back to the apartment, and had sex.

[Over the next few days, there were events that seemed important to write about...at the time. However, I only have some notes from that period (that were intended to be filled in later.) Now, as I go back over these fragments, trying to recall and elaborate on what happened seems like a silly chore. I'm just going to include the notes as they are.]

- The guru, Annie, and the baby move in with the boy...lots of fucking.
- Confrontations with grandma while trying to retrieve some clothing and baby gear.
- The boy's neighbors and roommate have small traumas when dealing with the new house guests.
- The current plan: The boy is to drive Annie, the guru, and the baby to New Mexico...they joke about maybe winding up in Old Mexico.
- The guru gets hit on at the bar by a drunk, 20-year-old guy.
- Annie has a trauma one afternoon, the guru tells her to go outside for some fresh air, a stranger on the street approaches Annie and tells her a big story about being stuck at the airport after missing his plane to Alaska...all because he helped out an alcoholic...now he needs cash to pay for the fees to change his flight. Annie

comes in and shares the story--she is in good spirits and completely renewed. She talks about how it seemed the stranger was magically sent to deliver this personal message to her. The boy tells her that he got pitched the same con over a month ago and gave the guy 30 bucks. The group jokes about how bad this guy is at making it to the airport on time.

- The final dinner in MN: There is a sign on the front of the restaurant that says, "no guns allowed", the guru asks the hostess if he should leave his gun with her, the guru later convinces Annie that Heinz ketchup comes from England.
- The group has almost no money but decide to leave anyway. The guru jokes that when he goes on a road trip he insists on pulling off at every gas station. "I only put in just enough gas to make it to the next petrol station. Never plan any further ahead than you have to."
- On the road in a southern Minnesota diner, there is Spam on the menu, the guru convinces Annie that Spam comes from England.
- See a sign on the road as they enter Iowa showing the distance to Des Moines. Talk about Des Moines being pegged as the prototypical "nowhere" place that a "nobody" comes from. The car's steering wheel starts to wobble on the interstate. Drive for a few miles, wobble gets worse, must pull off, next exit is Des Moines. Long talk about how they may never get out of Des Moines and will have to start up a zen center there. Car fixed the next morning, the mechanic gives the boy a 50% discount because he told them that he was trying to get a homeless mother to friends in New Mexico.

- The baby is content the entire time.
- While on the road, emails from the spiritual group in New Mexico are showing hesitation. They seem not to want any outside disruption. As the group drives past Kansas City (the one in Missouri...not Kansas), they simply decide to go to Old Mexico.

34

Today the group made it about 5 hours down Interstate-35 when the guru said he felt a little woozy. They pulled into a motel in the late afternoon, rather than pushing further.

[Again, all I have in front of me are some loose notes about the night. And I still don't feel like trying to fill them in. When writing, it is apparent you should spit out complete thoughts when you have them. Putting off writing for later is simply not writing.]

- The boy went to the bathroom in their hotel room, and Annie followed him in. They had sex on the toilet while the guru watched through the open door. Right afterwards, the guru grabbed Annie's arm and they had sex on the bed while the boy watched.
- The group travels on the road for a few more days. The daily pattern becomes more apparent: Brunch until noon, on the road until 6pm, they find a cheap hotel and fuck all night.
- Not much contact from anyone back in Minnesota. The boy has one email from a friend that disapproves of his trip. And he gets a call on his cell phone from his credit card's fraud department. They are also concerned about "recent activity."
- The last night in the US, they decide to celebrate by going out to a restaurant/bar. The manager is instantly drawn towards the baby. She holds the baby while she is informed that the guru is the father. The manager yells without

hesitation to the bartender, "Hey Bill, grandpa shoots straight!"

Section 3: Breaking Down the Old

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*The highest teaching is going through an experience we think is
'bad' until we realize it never was. -- Manflesh*

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36

A bunch more travel info:

After entering Mexico, the group gets waved over into a border checkpoint to have their vehicle searched. The guru clearly amuses the border guards with his white robes, white beard, missing teeth, and bamboo cane. While the guards peer into the car, the guru paces behind them, twirling his cane, and sings "El Paso" by Marty Robbins. After a very unthorough check of the car's contents, the group is allowed to proceed. In the background, a US helicopter patrols the Rio Grande.

Their next border stops include: getting their travel card to stay in Mexico legally for up to six months, paying for the travel cards, exchanging US dollars into pesos, getting Mexican car insurance, and getting a car permit. All the bureaucratic navigation goes well...except for the last one.

The boy attempts to achieve a permissible vehicle by showing proof of vehicle registration, the travel card, drivers license, and passport. However, the registration papers expired a week ago, and the boy doesn't have the most recent copy. As the guy behind the desk looks over the papers carefully, he mumbles something in Spanish. The boy doesn't need a translator to know that this man only speaks in terms of "no."

You are supposed to have a car permit if you travel a certain distance past the Mexican border. So, American drivers don't actually need one to get their car into Mexico. The three decide to press their luck and head further into the country without one.

A few miles out of the border town, they run into a recently built checkpoint. The guard gave the group a scrunched up face and mumbled in rapid Spanish. Again, it doesn't take the group any English to understand this is another person that only says "no."

They decide to turn around and check into a hotel back at the Mexican border town. At the hotel, the boy finds out that it will take a week for the necessary documents to be sent from Minnesota to Mexico, but it only takes two days if they are sent to Texas. He phones his father from the lobby to have the papers sent to a different hotel in Texas. When he gets back to the room, he finds the guru and Annie asleep holding hands. The baby rests peacefully.

...

These little border issues aren't exactly action packed. But this chapter, and this book generally, is not concerned with wrapping The Reader up in some intense whirlwind. Of significance was the boy's frustration at the border because of the car issues. He saw, this day's events as tiring and lackluster. The world was confronting him with playground bully strategies--getting in your way and refusing to step aside until you hand over your lunch money.

Yet the guru, going through the exact same situation, routinely responded from a purely factual perspective. And, to the boy, that viewpoint was contagious. His frustration was quickly squelched as useless and silly. Yes, they are held up by an imaginary line on the Earth. No matter how insane the boy sees this world, the guru takes these events as just another part of the trip. And it was clear that the guru is in no rush

to get anywhere. Instead, he seems to enjoy every moment...no matter how mundane.

If you haven't had the pleasure of living with someone like that, the boy highly recommends it as "refreshing."

38

The next few days are spent back in Texas while waiting for the car's current documentation to arrive.

Annie took this opportunity to buy a cheap swimsuit at a large department store. The boy and the guru elected to wait out in the parking lot while she was inside shopping.

The guru commented on the amazing obesity displayed by everyone entering and exiting the store. The conversation posited that most people are rather unconscious of their body. A desire for pleasure leads to eating...but not knowing when the body has had its fill results in overeating. Also, the stuffed feeling makes the body want to rest so it can focus energy towards digestion. Rest, where the body and mind are both at ease, might actually be rare for many people. Pain from an unhealthy body and high levels of anxiety from an unhealthy mind are continually discomfoting. The stuffed feeling becomes relied upon as a trigger to relax...and thus, the mythological humans these two discuss in the parking lot are on their way to addiction.

This simplified history of humanity is ended abruptly by an accident in the parking lot: A couple exiting the store had purchased a large, rectangular plastic container that looks to hold about 50 gallons. The husband pulled their SUV into the handicap spot close to the storefront so the wife didn't have to carry the container further down the concrete slab...well, actually she didn't have to carry the container at all. It was resting on top of a shopping cart that she was pushing.

The guru gave some commentary, "A box to put in a box to take to a box so they can put their boxes in it."

The wife struggled for a few minutes to load the empty container in the back of the SUV. Her husband sat in the driver's seat watching her through the truck's rear-view mirror. She was able to get the container in the truck, shut the back gate, and wheel the cart (which now only contained her purse) up to the passenger-side door. After grabbing her purse, her next struggle was to climb into the elevated seat...leaving the cart behind in the middle of the adjacent handicapped parking spot. The husband began to back up until he hit a car that was driving through the lot behind him.

There was a parking lot security guard on duty at the time. He had been driving around the pavement in a golf cart--passing the boy and the guru many times. By the time the guard arrived at the accident, the husband was already in a heated argument with the other driver in Spanish. Both drivers quickly got back into their cars and drove away without writing down any information. The obese security guard sat and watched--never getting out of his canopied golf cart to speak with either driver.

A short while later, Annie came out with a small bag. Seeing Annie emerge from the store, just as they witnessed so many other people do, provided a stark contrast. The boy asked the guru, "So, out of the hundreds of people we saw in this parking lot, on this gorgeous day, how many did you see smile?"

"Not counting Annie?" the guru clarified.

"Sure, not counting Annie."

"One."

"That's what I counted, too."

39

Breakfast in Texas:

The group stands in the department store parking lot after completing their morning shopping. For breakfast, they look around and locate a sign for the "International House of Pancakes." The boy chuckles for a bit and turns to Annie, "He [the guru] has to see this place." Annie gave a look of disapproval and continued to scan the acres of parking lots. She sighed in resignation and got into the car without saying another word.

They drove to the other side of the same slab of concrete and hunted for another parking spot. After getting back out of the car, the group waited inside the restaurant for a table to open up. The place was packed.

Remarkably few people take any notice of the group as they are lead through the restaurant to their table. Most people are too engrossed with their meal to look up. Nearly every person they pass, in the restaurant, is overweight. Groups of four or more take up most the tables. There are numerous families with small children. (And by small, I mean young.) Almost every child has a round belly struggling to be contained within his or her tee-shirt.

The group is seated, and they continue to survey the scene. The size and number of the restaurateurs provides difficulty for the group's 200-pound waitress. It seems that the restaurant layout did not account for needing this much space between chair-backs. There is also a 250-pound clown milling about who

is making balloon animals for the children. He confines his navigation to the few wider restaurant passageways and lets the kids make their way to him.

The clown's 12ish-year-old son, is sitting by a table full of various balloon figures. He occupies his time by dismantling the displays. He might have gotten yelled at for this, but the clown father is too occupied with pleasing the six screaming kids at his knees.

Most of the group's conversation centers on obesity, again. Today, it is glaringly obvious there is something amiss with human eating habits. A sign dangles from the ceiling above the group's table--spinning in the air-conditioning. It reads: "All you can eat pancakes!"

Findings on the common feeding process: Large plates of food are set down in front of the customers. The customers hunch over the food until they give a groan of exhaustion, as if taking a break from difficult manual labor. This groan often coincides with shifting into a reclined seating position. Some customers repeat the process while others do not. Eventually, when each of the table's members have finished eating, they make their way to the front of the restaurant to pay. Each customer's walk is a slow one. Again, it looks like they have just finished some backbreaking chore.

[Why do we eat ourselves to the point of such discomfort? Here you...or I could insert any numbers of reasons. Does "why" really matter, though? No matter the reason for it, perhaps all we need is one clear and good look at the obvious. This common and unnatural practice is right in front of everyone to see. If we honestly saw just how depressing and torturous this method of unconscious suicide is, wouldn't we stop?]

When the group's food comes, they all stare at it for a few moments under the florescent lights. Nothing seems right.

The scrambled eggs are nearly colorless, the toast is limp, the pancakes are a cloudy white, and the sausage looks like worms fried on the side-walk during a sunny day following a much needed rain.

The boy eats three bites of a pancake and suddenly stops. "This isn't even a pancake."

Annie was just pushing around her food with a fork. "I don't know what these are, but they sure aren't eggs."

The guru had put his knife and fork down a while ago. He had one teeny bite of sausage when coming within one knife-length of the rest of his food was too dangerous.

The waitress was taking an order at another table and began to wriggle by. She tore off the group's bill from her pad. As she set the bill on the table, she said in a monotonous voice, "How is everything?"

The guru said, "Terrible. I'm certain what you gave us is *not* food. You can take it away, please."

The waitress looked puzzled at all the full plates for a moment. Then she shrugged it off and just gathered as much as she could in her arms. She made it one step towards the kitchen when a man at the next table stopped her. He wanted his third triple-stack of all you can eat pancakes.

Annie asked the guru, "Don't people even taste what they are eating? If I were to eat myself fat, I'd at least want to do it on something that tastes *good*."

The guru responded flatly as he picked up the bill, "It's cheap."

40

The group sits in their Laredo, Texas hotel chatting after a good nap. They decide to search the internet to find some fun this evening. But, they aren't having much luck. The guru walks down to the front desk and asks, "Where is the most exciting place to go in Laredo?"

The desk attendant pauses, glances at another attendant, and responds with a shrug, "Well, it's Sunday." After another pause, the second attendant adds that Buffalo Wild Wings had a full parking lot about an hour ago.

Annie groans.

The boy says sarcastically, "When in Texas..."

The group gets directions. (The restaurant is actually located next door to IHOP.) After a good chuckle during their navigation through the intertwined parking lots, they find Buffalo Wild Wings to house 15 customers and 25 televisions. The group sits and orders fried potatoes, fried shrimp, and fried chicken with beer. They leave quickly after finishing part of their meal.

The next morning, documentation for the car arrives in the mail and they head again for the Mexican border. In the car, there is a lengthy debate over precisely which circle of hell they are now exiting.

42

Customs still refuses to give the boy the required documents to take his car further into Mexico. Despite having the title, proof of insurance, and valid registration; the new issue is that the car's title is in the name of the boy's father. Mexican border guards won't allow him to enter unless he can prove that his father is indeed his father. They require a copy of his birth certificate, which of course, the boy doesn't have.

The boy notices the beginning of his mind's tendency. He wonders briefly about what a birth certificate would definitively prove given the number of unrelated people that have the same names. The boy catches this thought process in its infancy, along with the memory of the guru's attitude towards their border issues. He makes a quick phone call to his father and the birth certificate is faxed within fifteen minutes. After finally being allowed to give the Mexican government money, the group is on their way into Mexico.

They travel about 4 hours south and stop at a hotel for the evening. In the lobby, there is a Mexican duo singing songs, in English, from the 60's and 70's. The Eagles, Bob Dylan, and David Bowie make the playlist numerous times.

The duet was surprisingly good. The wide range of the original artists' voices were each replicated with amazing precision.

Annie approached the band at one point during a short break. The band members were clearly delighted by her interest in their music. However, Annie's song requests failed because of an inability to share knowledge of the same song titles. She

finally resorted simply stating "David Bowie" and the band enthusiastically went back to playing away.

The next morning, most of the drive takes them southwest through the desert of central Mexico. They are now 8 hours or so past the southern tip of Texas. The mood is peaceful, but it also has an odd feeling of anticipation. Somehow it is snowing outside...and hard. The sparse cacti are coated frosty-white. They glide past the car silently as desert ghosts with arms frozen skyward in an expression of confusion.

43

For those who don't know, the Mexican Interstate Highway system is generally quite good (as of January 2007.) Finding the on-ramp from within a city can be difficult. But once you've got it, you have an easy drive. There is one other notable exception: Crossing the mountains near the west coast can be quite an event.

The mountain pass the group found themselves taking was called Hwy 40. It consists of at least five hours of constant turning, breaking, and accelerating along the sides of steep cliffs. The view is simply awe-inspiring. Thanks to the lack of sturdy guardrails, you can see thousands of feet below you, completely unobstructed.

Complicating things are the numerous tractor trailers sharing the single lane in each direction. These trucks lack the necessary power to accelerate up the steep hills. As a way to retain speed, they often try cut turns short, into the oncoming traffic's lane. It can be a bit stressful to round a blind curve on these mountain-sides...only to see a rusted out semi heading straight for you.

It may also be a bit stressful if you start to smell burning rubber about halfway through the mountain range. There really isn't anywhere to pull off the road and check things out. Judging by the newfound squishiness in the car's clutch, the transmission of this 1992 Honda Accord with 185,000 miles is starting to fail. With at least two hours of mountains to go, the boy resigns to staying in second gear...regardless of the

traffic. Hopefully, they can make it to Mazatlan without needing to shift.

The tension eases as they finally reach more gradual slopes hours later. The horizon opens up to reveal Mazatlan in the far distance under a huge red sunset...the type of illusion only made possible by sufficiently poor air quality. It is a beautiful and gloomy sight.

After a few miles, a stoplight appears in the distance. The boy hopes to slow down sufficiently to allow for the light to change by the time the car reaches it. He isn't quite successful and must force the car into neutral. Jamming the car back into gear after the light turns takes a considerable amount of gear-grinding.

A second stoplight appears in the distance. Traffic around the car is heavy as they are getting close to the edge of town. The boy tries to push the shifter back into neutral again, but it is stuck in gear. The car dies and refuses to restart.

Annie and the guru quickly jump out and begin to push while the boy fires the ignition. The broken down travelers are stuck in the center lane. Car horns have a distinct doppler effect as they whiz past along each side.

The car luckily starts again and first gear catches after a bunch more grinding. They soon spot an automotive garage to the side of the road and pull in. Again, the car dies, but it maintains enough momentum to roll into the parking lot.

The guru exclaims, "Ta-da!!"

Annie and the boy remember to breathe.

The baby sleeps peacefully.

...

One mechanic ends up knowing enough English to assure them the car will be fixed in a few days. The group catches a cab into town and hunts for a hotel...again.

They rest comfortably in Mazatlan. The car gets fixed quickly for a surprisingly good price. And their next task is finally finding a place to call "home."

44

House hunting on Stone Island:

After a short boat ride to Stone Island, the group gets dropped off at a wooden dock. It is a large, sturdy construction made of planks floating atop old barrels. Ropes tied to the mainland keep the platform somewhat stationary. A metal ladder hangs down from shore, with the first step being about knee high to a human.

It is a bit of a task to get onto shore. The wooden platform bobs up and down with each wave in the bay. The metal staircase, with its awkward height for a first step, tends to evade.

The boy manages to grab the island as it weaves past him. He jumps up, turns back to his friends, and reaches a hand out to Annie. With each ebb and flow, her hand misses connecting with his.

"Stop moving around!" the boy yells to Annie playfully.

"I'm not moving. You are the one that keeps jostling about!" Annie retorts.

"Don't be silly. I'm the one on solid ground!"

"Listen to you!... You are the one being silly! Solid ground. Ha! Like there is such a thing!"

[I'm prodded to think possibly all arguments are exactly like this one played out...two people merely claiming they are saying something different...hmm...that reminds me of some good

arguments I've witnessed. I boiled them down to each person's primary position (for clarity???)

Good Argument #1

Person A: "This is what I think."

Person B: "This is what I think."

Good Argument #2

Person A: "This is what I think."

Person B: "That is what you think."

Good Argument #3

Person A: "We are arguing."

Person B: "No we aren't."

Ok, where were we.]

After a short walk to the beach, the house hunters stop in a bar for a beer and let their bearings come to them. They try to get some information from the bartender, but he says he has never heard of a place called "Twin Towers Zen Center." Their beers are finished quickly and they continue on down the beach.

The zen center is supposed to be nearby, but there is no sign of it. Along the way, an old lady that notices the group is searching for something approaches to help. She is able to point them towards a house that might provide information on places for rent.

At that house, a person in the backyard leads them through some bushes along a walking path. They emerge to find a small group of people seated around a campfire. One of the women

there, named Natalie, immediately takes an interest. She agrees to lead the group on their house-hunting expedition.

[It turns out the zen center closed down a few years back. According to one website, it was named after the Sept. 11 Twin Tower collapse in New York City as a reference to the lack of compassion towards people from foreign lands. The owner is rumored to have subsequently closed down the center because he got sick of dealing with tourists.]

During the walk, Natalie discloses to the guru that she used to be an avid meditator. However, she admits she has a hard time getting in the practice of doing it routinely. During the short discussion, she leads the group towards a house they may be able to stay at. It is a house her artistic friend built.

As the group is walking down a narrow street, a middle aged man notices them and immediately invites them in for tea. The man leads the group up to a small table when it becomes apparent that this host is the one Natalie had intended to find. The artist grew up somewhere in Central America and speaks some English...although he refuses to speak a word of it until tea is ready.

The house isn't really a house at all. It is more akin to an unfinished sculpture. It is comprised of five different elevations, around a half dozen small rooms, and seven empty but connected pools scattered throughout the half-acre sized property

After tea is served, the man discloses that he is more interested in selling the place than renting it out. Oddly enough, another group of visitors (that the owner similarly did not anticipate) were just leaving the house as our main characters approached. The previous bunch was a family visiting

the island for the first time. They had no idea if the house was for sale, but when they past it on the street, they decided they must have it. The family walked in and placed a great offer on the spot. These were the first and only potential buyers the artist has had during the three years he has been trying to sell.

At tea, Natalie turns the conversation to her spiritual life. She is mainly interested in finding ways to accept meditation and yoga as part of her daily routine. Her lack of dedication frustrates her.

The guru doesn't give her the answer she wants. He proposes, that if she doesn't really want to meditate, she should simply stop meditating. Natalie makes several comments that indicate "giving up" would be nearly impossible for her. To her, meditation and yoga is the only thing that is keeping her sane, healthy, and "grounded" (whatever that might mean).

The guru backs her up a bit. He quickly gets her concession that her mind is what tortures her. She follows his rationale--concluding that her spirituality is filled with wanting an image of success, wanting to become someone she is not, and feeling guilty from failing to stick to her mental plan. At this point Natalie resorts to spouting memorized quotes from various sources to defend her spiritual search.

The talk is energetic and brings a lot of emotion out of Natalie. She shows a combination of anger and enthusiasm that causes her speech to become rapid. The entire time, the house owner sits with a smile observing the animation. While the guru is asking Natalie what in the hell she would use a purpose for, the owner turns to the boy and says quietly, "I wish I knew what

they say. I do not know English, so much...I wish I did. The talk is interesting."

The boy responds by giving a dismissive shrug of the shoulders. He picks up his tea and takes a very deliberate, slow sip. Then he raises his eyes from the cup to meet with the host. The boy smiles while he turns from the host to scan the surroundings while nodding his head "yes."

The host laughs with glee.

After thanking the homeowner for his hospitality, the group continues on their hunt for housing. They meet with a few other people but nothing really turns up. They head back to the ferry dock as the sun starts to set without any leads.

Overall, the group is unimpressed with Stone Island. Natalie, their guide, became a metaphor for the whole island (well...actually it is a peninsula). Everything was half built when people began to despise their dreams.

While waiting for the boat to arrive, the group looks down at the ocean dock bobbing up and down. They jokingly agree that, without a doubt, it is the dock that is moving. Stone Island isn't going anywhere!

46

Back in their Mazatlan hotel, the group came to accept that Stone Island was not the right place for them. Instead, they would look for a place within the Mazatlan city limits.

Later on that night, they got into a cab and asked the driver to take them to a bar that wasn't so noisy. The driver gave a queer response before they pointed to the baby and gestured towards their ears. The driver gave a nod of understanding and drove them confidently to a destination. The sign on the selected building said, "Canuck's."

After exiting the cab, the group ascended up the stairs leading to the bar's front door. On the stairs, they past an 80-year-old woman going in the opposite direction and mumbling to herself, "I need to find a hockey game. Maybe there is one down this way."

The group gave each other a quick glance and a chuckle and continued on. Once inside, they surveyed the area. A stage and dance floor was centered around a crescent, two-tiered seating area. It resembled a miniature version of a Las Vegas showroom.

There was only one table in the place available. As the group maneuvered to snatch it up, they got plenty of attention. The crowd was almost entirely retirement-aged and caucasian. They all sat in small groups; some of them enjoyed light hearted conversation. A name was printed on the back of each chair. The guru was headed for an empty chair with the label, "Jesus."

The group was seated for some time before it became apparent they weren't going to be served by the waitress. So, the boy went up to the bar to order drinks. While waiting for the

bartender, one of the 80-year-old caucasians took her place on stage, behind the microphone.

After thanking everyone for coming out, she began announcing the winners of "tonight's raffle." The first woman's name was called out and the lucky recipient approached the stage. The announcer disclosed the contents of the gift over the P.A. as the hand-off took place: A ten peso gift certificate to the Mazatlan library. The same polite applause separated the dozen or so prizes.

When the raffle was finished, the music began. The first song played was "Johnny Be Good." It was too loud for the baby; the group went back out to the street to catch a cab back to their hotel.

46 (cont.)

The group got some leads today on a house located within Old-Town Mazatlan. Viewing Mazatlan as a place to live brings a different perspective to the boy. Before, the residents around him seemed like statues. Now, he noticed the strange look that someone carved on all their faces. When you are a certain type of "strange," sometimes it is easy to forget that others don't see you as "normal."

The group had a discussion about the trip so far. Without all of the events that went "badly," they agreed they wouldn't be where they are now. The intervention, New Mexico falling through, the car breaking down, Stone Island being worse than expected--all of these events were necessary to bring them here.

There is this tendency in people to call events that change the course of their life "bad." But the change arising out of these events can create something amazing. For those involved, there is no need to feel bad about it. In our moment of "failure," an additional failure is often to realize that multiple tries are necessary to call anything a success.

Somehow we have decided to forget that life is in constant flux. And our mind cannot know where we are going. It functions only within memories of the previous that went. The present is much too vast and fundamental to be captured in thought. Put simply, the present just does not compute. When this fact frustrates the mind, the present is only further obscured.

A mind frustrated by "wanting to know" creates some odd situations. An example that came up recently: Humans spend who

knows how many millions of dollars on digging up dinosaur bones. Then we celebrate our knowing when we piece together a brontosaurus, study its traits for years, display it in museums, and update scientific texts...only to find it was all in error. (The brontosaurus was actually two different dinosaurs mistaken for one.) Now that the error is caught, we have two new dinosaurs to study, display, analyze, etc.

Meanwhile, it snows in the heart of the Mexican desert. The earth is sick with poison. People continue starving without clean water to drink...while others throw food into a toxic landfill and shit in clean water. Young girls are selling their bodies in exchange for severe depression. Drugs are relied upon as an escape from all this truth (rather than enjoying it).

Wanting to know has caused our priorities to become askew. There are the facts...*just* facts. Resisting them and fighting them only causes more distracted activity, avoidance, and pain. Humanity needs a jump into the present fact. If we could see beyond our mental image of things--we would finally see what is here and know what to do. We would evolve; our facts would change.

...

How am I, a reliable source of mental anguish, to stop seeing the world as my thoughts? Hmm...How?...How! Maybe I should get a book, maybe I need a guru, maybe I need to practice meditation...My god!!!! Stop with the silly plans. Stop thinking about how to stop thinking!!!

Or, continue to gravitate to some other thought as a solution. Continue to create for yourself a god, practice, answer, or purpose. Better yet, convince yourself you don't have a problem. (In reality, you are all holy-enlightened-

children-of-god destined for heaven within a land of illusion.)
After all, in reality, there is no such thing as a "problem."

These are facts. This is what we do. And what we do causes
a lot of pain. And that is just a fact--a temporary fact...I
think.

47

Over the next few days in Mazatlan, the car broke down, again. The boy went to six different car repair shops, got three different tow trucks, and fixed two more times. (I will spare us any further details of that project.) The guru, Annie, and the baby secured an apartment in Old Town Mazatlan for a month. (details similarly omitted)

There were also a few more emails to grandma. Grandma still wonders why Annie and the guru walked out during the intervention. They responded to grandma the same way as they did in the previous ten emails.

Dear [Grandma],

"We left Minnesota because you won't let Annie live and raise her child as she thinks best. And if you really wanted to help, what they actually need is money. They repeated, again and again, that what they absolutely do not want are further attempts to control Annie and the baby.

Grandma responded with an offer of a thousand dollars cash...on the condition that Annie and the baby move back in with her.

Checking In Again

A message from Manflesh:

Perhaps we are not doing so well, I fear. I wonder if you are actually reading. I want to remind you that this book is about reading The Book. It is about your attitude towards The Book as you read.

Are you getting frustrated with sloppy paragraphs, frequent tense changes, first and third perspective swaps, poor grammar and bad editing?

I am trying to make sure that you cannot delve into the story and watch it progress like a movie. All of this choppiness is intentional.

If so, why do you have issue with what The Book is? Why do you want to change it so badly? You are wishing the sun was green.

If you catch yourself criticizing The Book. You aren't reading the book. And if you aren't reading the book, then what are you criticizing?

I will continue on writing horribly, and I'm not even going to bother editing from here on out. If that is a problem, there is no need for you to read any further.

Section 4: When did the building start?

--

*Something happens...then a story is created...later the story is
changed...so what happened? -- Manflesh*

--

49

The group goes shopping for their new apartment: garbage bags, towels, coffee, bread, cigarettes, and alcohol make the list. The four sit in the back bedroom with the afternoon light coming through the thin, white-curtained window. Behind the window is the slightly hazy outline of a spiral staircase that leads to the roof. One of the old Mexican ladies that live downstairs periodically ascends and descends to hang laundry out to dry. Each time she passes, she clearly makes an effort not to peek into the room.

Annie requests that the boy read Osho (aka a bunch of other names). The boy cracks the book to a random page...which happens to be about the topic of paradoxes. Osho spends much of the chapter on the process of questioning. Paraphrasing the chapter, questions cannot guarantee truth, or a "right" answer. So questions are necessarily wrong. If you could ask a "right" question, the answer would come without any doubt. It would appear simultaneously with the question...but, in that case, there would be no need to ask the question. And so Osho goes... never really answering any questions.

...

As a note, if you haven't figured it out by now, the boy is the one writing this story. He has decided to make sure this is clear because of a potential problem he anticipates. The current living situation has started to uncover how this group will interact with each other.

Take the other events of today, the boy got the car fixed by another mechanic and also sat in his bedroom typing away on this

book. The guru spent much of the day typing on his computer and resting. Right now, Annie is in the kitchen trying to make some coffee. Judging by her sighs and clanging pans, she is having problems with the kitchen equipment. The boy hears the guru shout from the bedroom, "What is the matter?"

She huffs, "Every little thing is so difficult right now."

The guru responds, "That is not what I said at all! I said, 'Oh no! My computer went off and I lost everything I've been working on!'"

The boy chuckles to himself. He suspects that the guru is just trying to jostle Annie's switch that is currently stuck on "frustrated." The clanging subsides and Annie continues making coffee more subtly. The boy goes back to typing...

So, back to the problem. It seems this next stage of the little adventure the boy will be wandering off on his own. Up to this point, the group has not really been separated. They have just been driving, eating, and sleeping together. Observations of Annie, the guru, and the baby are probably going to become more limited. The boy would like to apologize to any reader that might want more of these characters. But really he is just stating the facts...as they come up. So, he supposes that there is no need to apologize. He's sorry about saying that there may have been a problem. Heheheheheh. But not really...

Oh, what fun!

50

The guru's twelveish email to Grandma:

Dear Grandma:

The intervention...that forced Annie and her baby out on the street in sub-zero temperatures...was ill-conceived. We had to knock on your neighbors' doors and shiver in some kind man's garage having nowhere to go. Because Annie's so called "friends" knew she was homeless, with a young baby...and did nothing to help...she now finds it impossible to believe they actually care about her. And since they all believe she is an alcoholic, she now claims: "I might as well be. Then, at least, I could enjoy this label that they stuck on me!"

Now, she refuses any further involvement with these "friends." Even worse, she refuses to live in the US where this type of violence is considered "caring" or "helpful." So, we are now in Mexico.

Entering alcohol treatment here is too difficult due to the baby, the low quality of care, and the language barrier. We would be able to get her treatment in England...and free of charge. But she would have to be registered with social services...which takes time.

If you want to help Annie, you have to trust me. I know how to care for the baby, and I know how to care for Annie. The intervention has set my efforts back considerably, but I believe we have this one, final shot.

I'd like to relay some details about why Annie feels she was treated unfairly: Annie recalls a full year of drinking wine with you...where you were the only one who would get drunk. Additionally, some of the "friends" at the intervention used to drink with Annie in the past. None of these people had any problem with Annie's drinking at that time, either. Again, most of the people at the intervention had little or no contact with Annie in the past five years. She feels everyone involved at that disastrous intervention were not in a position to label her as an alcoholic.

I have managed to convince Annie to get help if we can make it back to England where we can raise our baby comfortably, away from other intrusions. To make that happen, we need money for plane tickets, a place to rent for three months while our social service application is processed, food, and supplies for the baby. We also have debts beginning to pile up in Mexico. And as you know, rent in England is expensive. So, is \$20 thousand dollars more important than your daughter and granddaughter?

I remind you that you would be spending at least that much for treatment in the states. We need the money immediately while Annie is still willing to agree to get help. I fear she will turn towards alcohol if we allow the memory of how she was treated during your "Nice Family Christmas" to fester. This is not the time for conditions and hesitation.

Lots of love,

xxxxxx

51

The guru explains that in England, they don't kill off stray pets that people don't want. The discussion turns towards eating meat.

The boy says, "I've heard that some scientists accredit much of our large brain development with being carnivorous. Possibly, the only reason we can formulate the idea that eating meat is 'bad' is because we have for such a long time."

Annie says slyly, "But that is no reason not to change."

The boy retorts, "Sure... I guess I'm saying something a little different....I'm asking: How can humans honestly frown upon eating meat when so much of their history includes it? You just don't see many vegans that give thanks for our carnivorous tendencies. That's all..."

The guru jumps in with a possibly related point, "Not long ago, the church was convinced that the world was about 6000 years old. Then, when dinosaur bones were discovered, the church claimed god put them there 6000 years ago to have the illusion that they were older...And so, the church's story was saved....Since then, the church hasn't put up a big fuss about the 6000 year thing because scientists remain openly clueless about the origin of the universe."

The guru continues with another possibly related point, "True, our view of the world is full of imaginary attributes, but we make them real. We imagine the car, and then we build it. The stories in our head, our dreams, are brought into this world by humans. We create this world according to the content of our minds. Since we are constantly arguing and worrying in

our head, we have constant arguments and anxiety in the outside world. Our heads are very proficient at building bombs and making tax law. They just don't seem very good for love, peace, and happiness.

Since we cling to our minds...what we've known...we keep the status quo solid. But one good look at this world would show any sane person that we prefer a rather ugly and crazy dreamland. If you saw how this all works, you would drop your old dreams and change the story, right?...But we don't. We just repeat. And every time we go around, it makes it seem more and more solid."

The boy elaborates, "I'm always amazed how people think they change but they haven't. People argue against violence. And they don't realize that argument is violence. So they just do their part to perpetuate hate...by hating hate. Yuck what a mess..."

Annie steps in, "Thankfully, we are just little specs on a little planet in a vast universe that doesn't matter. Spend our life bickering until we blow ourselves up...trash the planet, wipe out all the plants and animals...so what."

The guru concludes, "Yes, the stars will continue to be born and die. Life will go on. No matter what we do...we can't really ruin anything...It's just a shame we don't appreciate that. Maybe then we would have a good time together while we're here."

The boy giggled, "Not that it would matter..."

"Oh, of course! Heheheheheh." The guru smiled as the enjoyable conversation died.

52

Another conversation...this one is on the topic of dreams:

According to the guru, the dominant dream state is one where you dream that you woke up. This is our normal "waking" state and our normal dream state. Everyone is walking around convinced that they are awake...all the while they experience everything within their personal dream land.

The guru cites a sleep study (which may or may not exist). Researchers reported that a few subjects were convinced they woke up, had an entire conversation with the researchers, and then went back to sleep. They reacted with disbelief when the researchers told them they were asleep the entire time. Some of the subjects had to be shown the entire video tape of them sleeping before they would accept the possibility that they hadn't woken up.

Hmm, let us say that you, the reader, is dreaming. And in your dream, you run into some familiar person. This person has a history, right? For instance, you could ask your dreamland friend what happened yesterday and they could answer. You could ask them about where they were born...what they do for a living...any number of things. But when you wake up, this character, along with their entire history, is erased. Is it not?...

When we run into the same individual in our waking state, how much of their character from our dream state do we still see? How would one find out?

Here The Book asks: What happened to you yesterday? Where were you born? What do you do for a living? Who are you talking to? Are you dreaming?

Perhaps, somehow, we come to the conclusion that these these interactions are, in fact, different. Is any of them more "real" than the other? Or do they differ merely in form, not substance? Perhaps they are all made up of of the same imaginary material???

Let us further hypothesize that you have read over this chapter's hypotheticals. Sometime afterwards, you manage to approach the author during our "waking state" and provide me with your input. Maybe you tell me something about the collaboration of minds in our "waking state" compared to the mind being relatively isolated during the "dream state." Maybe you conclude that life is but a dream. Maybe you offer...I don't know...something else.

Do you see what is happening here? Who is this "hypothetical reader" I am writing these questions to...right now? If an "actual" reader later approached me, couldn't my interaction be essentially the same? It isn't like I can predict what an actual reader might offer any more than I can predict what I will type in the future.

How am I to judge that you, The Reader, hypothetical or actual, is not just another character in my dream? Even if you offer any conclusions, are you to be trusted during this inquiry? Might any distinction you can dream up be akin to my dreaming about a researcher telling me I was previously dreaming?

To some of my dream characters, this inquiry might actually seem worthwhile. I want one to show up that knows how silly all this is.

55

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*The mind is a terrible master but a decent servant. In reality,
even the most commonplace mental constructs are insane. For
example, your mind can multiply things and end up with less than
it had before. -- A Great Zen Master*

--

56

The boy and Annie sit on the front balcony of their Mazatlan apartment. It is a comfortable and mellow evening.

The boy commented, "I feel like going out but don't know where to go." This is another feeling he knows well. It is the same one he recalls having often last fall. Anxiety? A distaste for his current situation? Or just the desire to explore?

Last fall in Minnesota, the boy semi-disinterestedly watched rent payments, food, drinks, and cigarettes chip away at his bank account. He had one day of "gainful" employment over the 6 months previous. On that day, he stopped as he walked down the street to model for a hair salon commercial. Three minutes later, the crisp fifty dollar bill in his pocket made him chuckle.

The commercial director had commented on the boy's hairstyle, wondering how much he had paid and where he got it done. The boy saw no reason to lie: "I cut it myself with a pair of rusty scissors about eight months ago."

The director shrugged the comment off. "Well, that's the look we're going for." Getting your hair cut to look like you didn't get a hair cut seems to have somehow become a fashion trend. These days many people spend hours trying to look like they don't care how they look.

The boy pictured someone walking into The Hair Salon of the Future: A male customer settles into a plush barber chair. The stylist spins the chair to face a large mirror and they both watch the stylist's reflection playfully lift locks of hair and

let them fall. The stylist asks: "Well, what would you like done, today."

"Oh...just give me the usual."

"Ok, no problem." The stylist quickly goes to work arranging the spotless utensils neatly on the counter top. The apron gets draped over the customer and is snugly secured around the neck. Then they spend the next half hour talking about the weather as the stylist snips at the air. The conversation wains and the stylist asks, "So, how does it look?"

"Just like I remember. Thanks." The apron comes off, the utensils are put away, and the customer approaches the reception desk. He pays, leaving a generous tip, and happily sets up another appointment six weeks in the future (this stylist knows his look exactly).

The boy later realized why he might have looked appealing to the advertising director. He just had sex a half hour before trodding down the street wearing a big "I just had sex" grin.

[We have traveled far today, haven't we? From The Salon of the Future, to the morning production of a hair salon commercial, to the boy's time in Minnesota, and to Mazatlan on the balcony.... Do we see how easy it is to loose sight of where we are? Let us not forget the writing and reading of this book. Look around you now. Is there a potential uniquely "here?"

Let us keep in mind why we were brought through all these memories. It is the product of desiring a new and fresh experience...and making the error of searching self-made fantasies for a lead.]

Back in that Minnesota era, the boy wanted to travel but couldn't decide where to go. Money issues were making him feel

trapped into finding a job. He managed to find one working for the federal government. It came with the benefits of good pay and being able to set his own hours from any internet connection within the US. He had the perfect job for traveling or relocating. Yet, he still felt trapped. He thought leaving meant he needed somewhere to go.

Annie and the boy sat on the Mazatlan balcony recalling the events that pushed them along. Grandma drove them out into the snow. Her growing desperation caused concern that she would soon contact some sort of authority. Strains upon the hospitality at the boy's apartment gave added motivation to hit the road. Those in New Mexico resisted having visitors...so plans changed, again.

I suppose the joke is that nobody can ever really be stuck. The world around you is always changing and affecting you. Just start going with them and then you realize that the world continuously sweeps you along. You can only fantasize that you are stuck.

Now the boy understands that, despite the hours he spent dreaming of a destination, he never really cared that much about where he went. He just wanted to go. He wanted to try new situations until one clicked. Where it clicks never matters—only the click does.

This big frozen web of memory finally circles back to the present. He excuses himself to go hail a cab. In his mind he has no picture of where he is going...and it feels natural to him.

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Observing without resistance is like drowning in the middle of a lake where your only reaction is wonderment. -- Manflesh

--

A story about an experience:

The boy smoked some weed obtained earlier from a stranger on the street. After he smoked, he retreated to his room to watch porn.

[Just to illustrate how fun thinking can be, we will show how getting high and jacking off is a valid path to enlightenment. Afterwards, we could discuss the logistics of setting up our little "Cum and Get Stoned" meditation retreat center. We might even develop some rituals and helpful equipment, all complete with rich, ornamental symbolism. Our next tasks could be putting together the boy's world wide lecture tour and multiple explanatory texts. After all that, we might be prodded to discuss whether every other spiritual sect ever devised differs from ours merely in form and not substance.

Here, I'll get us going:

Long ago, the chosen one, was unexpectedly overcome by an energy greater than his own. Drawn towards a spiraling cosmic vortex, he was given no other choice but to submit to the universe itself. After taking the leap into the true unknown,

all that remained of him was pure, divine awe. As an odd consequence of that revelatory day, the chosen one has discovered how to merge into sexual union with existence itself. As tools, he sometimes uses erotic thoughts and other environmental elements to generate the proper mood. Then he drops the thoughts and meditates on the energy felt within his lower chakras. The raw intensity he allows is so great that it draws him into a witness perspective—one who is merely watching an impersonal human body. The more he surrenders to this perspective, the greater the increase in energy intensity he experiences. Soon awareness of the physical world drops away leaving nothing but a loving embrace in the One.

Notes from an interview with the chosen one Jan, 2007:

"Merging completely with the One, is a difficult topic to discuss. I can see how there would be much opportunity for misunderstanding by those who attempt to understand this experience conceptually. To those that have had the experience for themselves, there is no need to clarify anything. Yet, I would like to take this time to speak to the others.

Union with the One feels very sexual to me. But I believe that term to be very inadequate. I have rarely had an ejaculation while deep into this union. Perhaps a better way to describe the experience is consciously accepting an orgasmic death. For I have gone far beyond a point where I could simply call the experience "pleasurable." I have already realized clearly, within my mind, a train of thought that maintained his sense of direction: front, back, left, right, up, and down that is centered from a particular location. And the thought

maintaining all physical orientation has been dropped. The whole world has disappeared...including me, my body, and everything else. But "something" remains. What that "something" is, I can not explain.

Although, 'what it is not,' I could say a lot about...hehehehe.

...

Here is what The Book says about what it is not: "Every word ever said in every language can be defined as 'What it is not.' 'What it is not' is the only conversation mankind has had and will ever have. 'What it is not' is mankind's only thought.]

...

On this particular day in Mexico, the boy was brought out of union with the One...and the world sprang back to life. His trigger was hearing a truck on the streets of Mazatlan beeping to signal to the world, "Watch out everyone! I'm in reverse!" The label "truck" and a vague sense of the beeping sound located within a space were the first thoughts. The next thought was, "I can't believe we think this world is real!"

Yet, in the background, that "something" remained.

[At this point, The Book would like to converse a bit with The Reader. The Book had some qualms about including the story of this experience. Let me explain why. A story about a so called "enlightenment" experience does very little to help The Reader towards a similar experience. In fact, The Book can see how such stories can actually inhibit The Reader from heading in the right direction. But since The Reader cannot change The Book, neither will The Book. Also, to show The Reader that the

mind can always come up with any number of justifications for "what happened." The book will include another:

For those who agreed at the outset of our little exchange to try and allow The Book to exist in peace, here is a chance to put you to the test. Even if The Reader has not had a similar experience to the one above, The Book would like to ask The Reader to assume that such an experience is possible. Given that space, the above experience proves at least the following:

1. Sexual energy is amazing.
2. The world most people think is "real" is just a dream. Just as you wake up from a dream, you can stop thinking about the physical world.
3. When thought of it ceases, there is no more "I" and no more "that." The whole remains without deviation.
4. You cannot die because there is no individual "you."
5. Those who judge others' actions merely judge the quality of their own dream.
6. All attempts at applying meaning to the physical world (scientific, historic, religious, etc.) are false since they disappear if nobody thinks about them.
7. You have no purpose, nothing matters, and there is nothing you can do about it...but you can choose to enjoy witnessing this strange phenomenon or not.
8. While connected to a body in this physical world, it is possible to find what lies beyond or continue dreaming.

If you tried this meditation (or something similar), ask yourself afterwards: Did you notice a point where you snapped peacefully into enjoyment of the energy? Did the intensity during this time build rapidly? Did you notice how hesitant to

accept this pleasure you were a moment before? Just a second earlier, why didn't you want to take this bliss willingly? What prevented you from doing so? Then when you snapped into acceptance, did the way you saw the world around you seem different than before?

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For most people, there is a stage where doubt can cut through false confidence. There is also a later stage where doubt prevents true confidence. -- Manflesh

--

The boy woke up with a sore tummy. He pressed around in his lower abdomen and felt the pressure under the skin. "Constipation?" he wondered. He couldn't recall the last time he took a shit. "Was it at this apartment? In a hotel? Maybe in Texas...Des Moines?" He had no idea. The group later went out to eat and check email.

One email was from grandma to Annie. She just wanted to say that she blames Annie for the pain she feels. Annie responded to grandma to say that this would be the last time they talked to each other. (The guru, however, commented to Annie and the boy that he was far from done with grandma.)

Later that night, the boy was still feeling constipated. He tried to take a shit but nothing would budge.

A story about another experience:

The boy remembers the guru saying, if your going to drink...then drink, if you are going to fuck...then fuck. He used the guru's words to justify smoking twice as much weed as

usual and going back into his masturbation meditation. After being in deep for about 30 minutes, he noticed a muffled voice in the distance.

Earlier today, he had been trying to sleep while the same angered voice was keeping him awake. It was one of the older Mexican women that live downstairs. He recognized the voice from a scolding Annie got recently. The group interpreted the elderly woman as saying the baby wasn't being fed enough. Note, it would be generous to tally this womans contact with Annie and the baby at a combined duration of three minutes. A neighbor's baby cries frequently nearby. Perhaps that sparked misdirected criticism...who knows...

Anyway, the boy heard the muffled voice from downstairs say, "Bambino." He attempted to listen in closely to catch more floating words but ended up getting bored with the project. Back when he was paying more attention to his body, the muffled voice floated by, again. He didn't catch it, but he got suckered back to tuning in. A little later, he noticed it sounded like English. "You ain't gonna cum!" The voice said. He dismissed it and went on...a little later the voice floated by again. "We ain't always thinking about you!" Next the voice laughed and said, "Wacky Tobaccy."

Here is how common insanity works:

A perception of the world is made. Next, the perception is thought about. By thinking about a perception, it is maintained in memory. Usually thoughts include a dissection of the memory in order to extract some particular information. This is where things start to get crazy.

The usual course takes place in a mind that doesn't realize its analysis is upon an imaginary thought (the memory of perception). This mind is well on its way to the insane conclusion that something *actually* happened. Tried and true methods to get insanity machine clunking away include: "What was that?" "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" and my personal favorite..."How was work?"

Since human memory is limited, there are large ambiguities and unknowns in the remembered perception. Awareness of this part of the process is almost never maintained in the mind as it continues to work. The subject is unaware that they are already lost. Things get further confused because of another simple fact that goes unrecognized: reality has since moved on. The scene in memory is still going in parallel and overlaps any ongoing perception. A dense dream scape is now projected onto the world around them. Living nearly continuously in this state, most humans have completely forgotten what it is like to see the world without multiple layers of their own dreams on top.

The moment a question is asked, the mind has already searched for a particular type of answer to fit that question. The answer's structure has been supplied with the question. Any subsequent analysis will be a screening for particular bits of info that are compatible with the type of answer sought. Again, the mind is often unaware of this process. People continue on--thinking they are searching for an answer they didn't already create.

Along the way, the brain is constantly supplying additional analogous content. Often there are remembered labels, each with their own history (e.g. something resembles beef nachos brings about likes or dislikes, previous experience with

beef/nachos/whatever). The object label—a mishmash of often edited memory—is now confusingly mixed into the remembered perception. (The person thinks they saw beef nachos but what they are doing is looking at the current perception of their personal thought form of beef nachos.)

Remember, this mind actually believes what they see in their memory was how the perception really was. You might catch an insane person claiming they have actually seen beef nachos before...Don't trust them.

What I would call “paranoid” is merely a flavor of the common, insane mindset. A mind labeled “paranoid” is one that gravitates towards thoughts like: “Are they talking about me?” Asking questions like this one starts the process of [lost my concentration here, sorry...] starts the process of connecting thoughts in an effort to produce “They ARE thinking about me.” The search continues until incomplete memories are connected in the affirmative or are dismissed. Therefore, the more lost in thought the person is, the greater likelihood that people are talking about them.

Another strain of insane mind is the scientific one. These gravitate towards the “what happened/what was that” type of questions. They may try to use equipment to shore up the limitations of their memory, but this strategy only further obscures the fact that all they subsequently analyze is their own thoughts. The same process of dissecting portions of a memory and comparing with previously stored thoughts ensues.

A scientific question automatically supplies a huge, imaginary framework. Previous scientific knowledge, combined with the imaginary construct of logic, comes rushing in. The scientific question brings with it an assumption that an answer

may be found and supported. The question supplies one side of the equation and simultaneously limits the other side of the equation to a currently expressible answer.

If a scientific mind cannot find a particular answer it is searching for, it may give up. However, even in failure, the whole thought process is reinforced and even better poised to be reapplied. A good scientist, by necessity, won't get discouraged back into reality for very long. They will quickly go back to asking the same questions--never realizing all they will ever produce are thoughts about thought.

The same process goes on with spiritual inquisitors. You may conclude there is you, god, or that there is neither. Any way you slice it, your answer is imaginary. Any questions. All questions. They are all insane. They all mistake visions of a past thought as saying something about ongoing reality. The difference only lies in variations of the procedural structure used to analyze remembered perceptions. Insanity is equally enforced every time a question is asked. The process of thought is remembered again and takes further hold on the internal structure of the brain.

If you convince yourself that you've got the answer, you have just jailed yourself in a prison of thought. If you convince yourself that you don't have the answer, you've just supplied your answer. You are trapped in a dream, again.

Take a hypothetical, here. If the boy calls himself paranoid to think the Mexican lady was speaking about him in English, he is stuck. He discounts the possibility that his mind can translate unspoken material into something he could interpret using English. If he has a tenancy to repeatedly deny this type of communication, he may go on to refuse the

possibility of any communication beyond exchanging commonly learned thought. That could turn out to be a remarkably self-limiting position. Think about it...

But let us return to the boy's memory: Might there be some truth to thinking that communication through an uncommon language is possible? Is the number of strange coincidences in the boy's life too many to discount as completely imaginary? Isn't he constantly struck by mystery? How can he honestly convince himself there isn't something remarkably different from personal thought connecting us?

We can go on to compare our waking state to the one we call dreaming. Isn't it possible to communicate through an unknown foreign language in your dreams? Couldn't you understand clearly every word of an alien conversation? How different is our waking state? Might the only difference be that we simply assume more self-limitations?

In asking a question, we often assume that we don't already have the answer. If we already had the answer, there would be no reason to hunt for it. Right? But, can you agree that by asking any question you create an empty slot in which the answer may be placed? Does asking a question set in motion a process designed to produce an answer? In asking a question, do we assume that an answer is within the reaches of our mental capacity? Are we just limiting our answer to within the reaches of our own thought? And if we are, wouldn't we already have the answer in there somewhere?

And what good are our answers, anyway? Why even bother trying to find them? Even when answers do come, isn't there always room for more questions? Can't you change your answers

around as much as you want? Can you even keep asking the same questions your whole life?

Yes or no, isn't each the product of a doubtful mindset?

Am I wearing you out with all my inquiry?

Can the questioning ever end?

And, what did the boy learn today?

Finally, he got exhausted and just stopped asking...

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Tee-Shirt idea:

ENLIGHTENMENT

(it is just the beginning)

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The boy has concluded something today: He is constipated. There are brief moments of sharp pain that occur in a few, specific locations within his lower abdomen. These are suspected to be the primary blockage locations. When the periodic pain begins, the boy notices a corresponding mental pain--the desire to escape the physical pain.

When the boy fixates on the mental pain, his physical discomfort appears to grow in direct correlation. And similarly, when the boy disassociates with the mental pain, the physical pain becomes more tolerable.

When the mental pain drops, that is when the boy clearly sees it as the substance of fear. It's only effect is to further constrict his body--hindering the body from healing itself. After dropping the fear, the muscles relax. Shortly afterwards, there is often the reward of shifting fecal matter. The pain vanishes completely...for a time.

During the interim, information is gleaned. He suspects the illness was entirely mind created. Stress and over attention to events outside the body left him unaware of how tense his body was. Desire to once again return to a relaxed state motivated him to smoke too much weed. Now that the real problem has caused physical symptoms, fear entered in, and the situation escalated.

The boy sits wondering how many of our "illnesses" are actually mind created? Obesity is the number one killer, as far as he can tell. Some cases might be genetic, but how much of familial obesity is a mindset passed along during the first few

years? Would a one-month-old baby adopted and raised in a completely different culture still grow to be a pear-shaped, 150 pound, weeble-wobble at age twelve? Hmm...possibly. He is also curious just how powerful one generation's mindset is in producing corresponding genetics. Hmm...

Or what about that big word "cancer?" How many cases go completely undiagnosed because the body automatically heals itself before any tests are conducted? He wonders, if regular check-ups and early diagnosis actually are helpful. If a person is told that they are in the early stages of cancer, that will certainly add anxiety. To what extent does neurotic attention to cancer actually aid cancerous growth? Could you even make cancer more likely just by constantly thinking in terms of yourself already having it?

Hmm...again. The boy doesn't know what the medical world says to all this. He notes to himself that stress alone can start even communicable diseases. He got mononucleosis back in high school. Assuming physical illness can actually be neurotic disorders, the ability of our mind to create the physical world is amazing. And our inability to respect this power is a big problem.

We may have a harmful addiction. Then we try to break that addiction. The effort causes our lives to be even more controlled.

We may feel that we were "wronged." Our effort for justice further solidifies our mindset of feeling victimized. The world is seen to increase it's attack.

We may try to "save" the environment. Then we watch our efforts further prevent nature from running a natural course. We cause nature to make more drastic adjustments.

We may try to find peace. And the mindset that we don't already have it is further ingrained. The search leads us further astray.

Might man make every disease...every disaster...every problem? After all, nature knows nothing of these words. Why are we so quick to justify our meddling? Why are we all taught to think we should fix things? Shouldn't there be adequate suspicion towards this suspect to at least obtain a search warrant?

The boy concludes that any attempts to prevent meddling would only be more meddling.

The mind is a very illusive criminal.

Oh, here comes the pain again...

[after running to the bathroom, here is his report:]

Several minutes spent with the sensation of pooping out a baseball. Latter inspection showed the patient produced only a tablespoon of green/brown liquid. Anus is slightly raw from frequent wiping. Patient reports a dull ache in the lower abdomen, shortened breath, and a slight feeling of nausea. Advised to take further bed rest and continue hydration. Toilet is flushed and awaiting patient's return.

The boy laid observing the dull ache. The more clearly he observed it, the physical pain was sensed more intensely. Although the intensity grew, his mental unease simultaneously subsided. He continued his observation, feeling the pain as

thoughtlessly as possible. He lay at peace...letting the pain overwhelm him.

After a few minutes, the pain subsides completely. The boy is at peace, clear headed, and in total comfort. He felt somehow instantly cured but that thought brought with it doubt. This doubt got his mind turning again...he re-associated with his ill body. The dull ache came back instantly with its partner--his "woe is me" story. He realized how big of an idiot he was being and instantly dropped his attachment to thinking of himself as "ill." He was snapped out of a peaceful rest by the need to poop out a baseball.

[here is what he has to report:]

Patient finally reacting to treatment. Successful bowel movement at 4:38 pm, today. Feces very compacted...dark brown in color. Patient reports previous pain and nausea has subsided but anus is still sore from wiping. Recommending further bed rest and continued hydration. Toilet flushed and awaiting patient's return.

Children's Story #2

Today, I lay in bed. It is the tail end of my constipation. Physically, I feel a little weak...but otherwise I am fine. I have been lying in bed for over an hour with repeated half-assed ideas about getting up this afternoon.

A jostle of my bedroom door handle snaps me out of self-concern. The door slowly pushes open and a young boy is standing in the entryway. He is not startled to find me in the room. Without my thick glasses, somehow I can see his big, curious eyes as he stands calmly.

I smile and sit up. The boy approaches my bed with caution and returns my smile. After a pause, I try to communicate with a gesture to my stomach and a "yuck" expression on my face. The boy responds quickly by pulling up his shirt to show me his round belly. When he looks up at me, his eyes bring a light playfulness I realize I haven't felt in days.

He waits in silence by the bed as I get dressed. While putting my pants on, I notice some empty plastic water bottles on the floor from my attempts at re-hydration. I pick one up as the boy studies my movements. First, I twist off the cap. Then I crush the bottle as completely as I can and replace the cap. I display the shrunken bottle to the boy. He glances between the bottle and then up at me repeatedly.

I go through the process with two more plastic bottles--the last of which the boy found on the floor and brought over to me. Each time, the boy watches my movements with the same intensity.

I am quite enjoying the visit. There is something therapeutic in cleaning up my signs of sickness. His peaceful and innocent curiosity forces me to open up to a better feeling.

Just after the bottles are all crushed, we are alarmed by a few heavy and hurried footsteps. I glance toward the doorway to see one of the Mexican ladies from downstairs streaking in. Her bright yellow garments trail behind her as she lunges towards the young boy with one hand raised--ready to slap. I tense up. The boy just turns away.

My startled eyes make contact with the woman just as she is about to strike. She hesitates and lowers her hand. The young boy doesn't flinch, move, or say a word. The woman snatches the boy by his armpits--jostling his head a little. I expect him to start crying but he doesn't make the slightest whimper. Instead, he turns completely submissive. My impression is that he is familiar with punishment like this. He knows any attempt to argue or fight is useless. The joy from his face has been completely erased and is replaced with a simple, deep sadness.

I attempt to wave "bye-bye," but the child is already out the door. The mother is scolding in rapid Spanish.

I remain sitting on the edge of my bed for a few minutes shocked by the sudden events. A small pile of crushed bottles rest beside me.

Up the stairs and through my bedroom door, the sound of a sharp crack winds its way to my ears.

The child begins to cry.

The mother yells.

The child cries harder.

The mother yells louder.

This continues throughout next hour.

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Annie and the guru came back from a wander around town. They popped into the boy's bedroom for a little chat. After a short update on the boy's bowels, they told their story:

They were sitting at a restaurant when Natalie, from Stone Island, showed up. They told Natalie that they just came to enjoy a quiet cup of coffee together. She responded that she normally prefers her own company, too...as she pulled up a chair and sat down. She went on to ask questions about the various teachings the guru gives. He responds by running down the standard resumé. He was a Christian minister, a shaman for the Blackfoot tribe, Hindu guru, and raised Tibetan Buddhist; but can now be described a tantric practitioner and Shinto Zen Master.

Natalie perked up at the word tantra and claims she has found a few tantric partners in the area. After a while, it became apparent that she really is just fucking people for a place to sleep at night. She isn't quite comfortable with these relationships, and complains about her partners always wanting her to be submissive.

After a pause, she brought the conversation back to the guru: "You also teach Satanism, don't you?" The guru responded, "I'm sorry, we have many things to carefully take care of today. Good luck with your living situation." They said goodbye to Natalie and walked the 15 paces to the next restaurant, sat down, and ordered another coffee.

Back in the apartment the guru said to the boy, "You know, often times the people that are hopelessly lost are the ones

that call themselves 'spiritual.' But we did get one piece of useful information out of her. She said the upcoming 'Carnival' goes on for weeks and the whole town will be packed. We might think about visiting somewhere else during that mess. Maybe just down the coast or something."

Annie jumped in, "Oh god. I'm getting so sick and tired of moving all the time."

The guru turns to Annie and says, "We are moved by the river, but we are the river." He repeats slowly in a deeper voice, "We are moved by the river, but we are the river."

The boy began to laugh.

The guru glared at the boy, "Wasn't that deep enough for you? Oh...the river is deep...did I forget to mention that?"

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*The best guru is a dead guru because you can make them say
whatever you want.*

-- A Great Zen Master

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Thoughts brought on by a "big" book:

This here little book is my first real writing endeavor. I have sporadically jotted down things in journals in the past, but never took it seriously.

Writing has been interesting...and difficult. My technical proficiency (I think I'm using that word right) of the English language is shaky at best. (I pause to consider if I used my parentheticals correctly). (Oops, period goes inside the right paren.) (But what about sentence fragments (like the previous paren)?)(?) (And what the hell is with parenthesis in a parenthesis...or successive parentheses?) I guess I'll just keep on going trying to get things out the best I can...or I could just shut up.

...

Nope, I'll keep going. 3:51 am is no time to stop tonight.

So, I'm writing a book. And thinking about books. You know, the really big ones--the ones that seem to have a large

effect on the world as it appears today. But even as I can make that last statement in confidence, it still seems shaky.

The world is still largely the same as it was before any of these "big" books were widely read. People still spend their days loving to suffer and loving stories of other's suffering. We are still at war. We remain selfish brats with an air of superiority to cover up insecurity. We are still trying to find better ways to sedate our mental state.

Although, before books, I wonder if we weren't so confused about what to do with our day.

(Maybe, I'll just read a book!)

I'm drawn to take the bible for an example. In Mexico, you can find a shrine of Mary in the back of the average roadside gas station. I guess after you fill up the tank, you just send your messages to god via the Catholic postal service, sip on a Coca-cola®, and get back on the road in under ten minutes. Thank you Spanish Conquistadorian efficiency! Their bible wielding method of conversion seems to have been very effective. Just tell a Mexican, "Sorry, I don't speak Mexican." Then watch how they get mad.

Cynics often like to remind us that Jesus wasn't a Christian. Also, they may note that he didn't write the bible. And it is no wonder he didn't write anything down. Writing is a very isolated process for someone who was said to live only for the people around him. If he wanted to say something, I imagine he just said it right there and then. If he was 1/3 of the man they say god is, he wasn't preaching to a far off land in some far off time. We took up that job after we got him out of the way.

Now millions (maybe billions??) say they love Jesus. How is this possible when even his closest disciples turned on him repeatedly?

I'm being cynical about the Christians here. But don't get me wrong. I hope Jesus comes back, just as the bible tells me so. And I will be more than willing to listen to what that 70-year-old Korean woman has to say. Yet, I wonder how many Christians will have similarly open ears. How many will claim she is actually the Anti-Christ. And I wonder what type of crucifixion we would get to watch this time!

But I digress a bit.

Sorry, writing is hard...Especially while holding a cigarette.

I digress again. But I'm the one writing the book. And all of my writing is for me. But I still have this hope (*my* hope) that I write something that affects people in a certain way. I want the gaps in my repetitive and redundant words, scatter-brained paragraphs, and disjointed chapters to reveal something to The Reader. It is my joy to be a part of someone else's discovery. I hope I provide a gap of courage for The Reader to slice themselves open and study the gore.

Oh, another gap I attempt to write for...the one after a book is put down. Maybe something in the book intertwines with The Reader's dreams. Maybe there will be something in an average day-to-day moment that corresponds to some of my blah-to-blah.

Maybe I will just get a groan at my attempt to be cute. That's ok. All my writing is for me.

But, maybe, just maybe, I can push someone to finally tell another person how they honestly feel. Maybe someone will

finally quit doing what they always complain about...like that job, relationship, or mindset they hate...without needing a subsequent plan.

Maybe I succeed in aiding some discovery. Maybe I don't. That's ok. All my writing is for me.

And that is enough for me today...time to put the book down and enjoy a gap.

Much love,

The Book

68

No response from grandma for some time, now. The boy had a couple emails:

His first was from his law school alma matter. They request he update his employment status for their records. The boy responds by clicking delete.

For those not privy to the game, law schools participate in struggle for national ranking. Those who devise the ranking use various factors, such as: reputation, cost, teacher to student ratio, percent of graduates that pass a certain test to practice law before a court, average starting salary of new graduates, etc., etc. Then something collects the statistics from each individual school and assigns a value to each factor. Something else weights each factor according to another something else. And a final something else rolls all the weighted factors up into an overall score. The school's overall scores are compared to determine the school's ranking. (The boy is probably forgetting something else, too. But you get the picture.)

So, the boy's former school (not highly ranked) has an ongoing concern because, as an unemployed graduate, the boy is a black mark on their ranking. The boy does not wish to discuss this particular absurdity any further...

The second email was from his parents. They are concerned because he just "vanished" to Mexico in the company of people they have never met. So, being the compassionate but stubborn son he is, he responds the exact same way as he did the last four times his parents wrote him similar emails:

Click on 'respond'. Type: "I'm fine. I'm fine." Then click 'send.'

He sits staring at the computer screen while wondering why it seems necessary to worry about someone else? The question prompts the memory of a story:

The guru was sick in India. At the time, he had about a half dozen devotees. During his period of illness, none of his devotees went home. Often, a devotee would come into the room and ask him if he needed anything. He would respond with a simple, "No, I just need time to rest."

Then the devotee would return to the opposite side of the bedroom door and whisper nervously amongst the others. Every once in a while, the anxious rabble would subside. This was the guru's sign that soon the bedroom door would open slowly again and he would be asked, "Can I get you anything?"

To which, he would respond, "No, I just need to rest."

This game lasted for five days.

But, there was one devotee that acted differently. She brought a chair into his bedroom and sat in silence the entire time. When the guru wanted something he would simply ask her.

This brings a one-liner to mind: "Want to learn more about someone? Tell them you are really sick."

Worry is the type of "care" the boy's parents are great at. He recalls his family planning a trip to Wisconsin. At the time, the boy was living in Minnesota. His parents resided in Iowa.

On the day before the trip, the boy's mother called him on the phone. She was concerned there would not be enough sleeping space for everyone in the Wisconsin cabin they rented. The boy responded that he would pack a tent, just in case. He tried to

ease the worries by making sure to sincerely state that he didn't mind if he had to sleep outside.

The phone rang again a half hour later. His mother was now concerned there would not be room for a tent in their car. [I'll try to make this clear...] The car, along with everyone and everything going into the car, is in Minnesota. Mom is calling because of the her results that she got when she tried to pack up a car in her head from 300 miles away.

The boy does not wish to discuss this particular absurdity any further. [But the book is going to anyway.] The practice of worrying about someone else fascinates me. Specifically, how did people ever come to say things like the boy's mother often does? "I'm concerned about you because I love you."

When did love and fear become so mixed up? People could at least be clear to avoid further confusion: "I'm concerned about you because I'm afraid of the future." Or more accurately, "I'm concerned about you because I'm concerned about a future situation I think I won't like. Or more honestly, "I'm just concerned about me."

69

Earlier tonight, a 30-something male walked up to the group at an outdoor restaurant. He initially approached the boy to ask him where he got his hat. The boy replied, "Minnesota." Apparently the answer wasn't good enough. The male just stood there thinking for a few moments. The boy added, "I looked for a long time. A good hat is hard to find these days."

The male continued to stand silently while searching his mind for something.

The guru took over: "What brings you to Mexico?"

The male came out of his thoughts. "Business. I sell remote controlled helicopters."

[The guru had been seeing advertisements on TV for remote controlled helicopters back in the US for over a month. He never missed an opportunity to say how much he wanted one. The humor of this scene just doesn't come across in writing.]

The guru offered the stranger a seat, and Annie attempted to probe at what this man really wanted. She asked somewhat sarcastically, "Do you have any questions for a Great Zen Master?"

The male responded without hesitation, "How do you find love?"

I'll try to summarize the guru's response for those who may be interested:

Basically, the search for love is a problem because you are looking for something outside of yourself in an effort to feel whole. But, an immutable fact is that you are already complete. So, in searching for love, you ask someone else to do the

impossible. These types of requests result in disappointment...consistently.

The reason you don't know you are complete (and can't even love yourself) is because you don't know your real "self." You are not who you think you are. The person you think you are is a creation of imagination. It starts being built when your parents give you a name and teach you about separate objects. The false self continues to grow along with learning other concepts like "me," "that," and "mine."

After years and years of thinking you are someone you are not, it is hard to remember the truth. But if you could turn off your imagination, the guru believes the real self will emerge. Once you are your real self again, you will know your union with all. And that union is love itself.

[Now, it might be fun to fantasize that the stranger responded with an emphatic, "Of course! Thank you so much!!" But no, the male's head hung low and deep in thought.]

Annie stepped in at this point and shared a story: She was in India wondering why everyone was so put off by her. One day, she resolved to try and only think nice things about herself. She says the difference in the way people treated her was "night and day."

The male thought a little longer and got up slowly. He thanked everyone and shook hands.

After he left, Annie commented to the guru: "Does he know he's gay?"

The guru said, "I think so."

"He wanted him bad," pointing to the boy.

"Oh, yea. That was obvious."

The boy said, "No he didn't. Weren't you listening to what he said? He liked my hat!"

The guru and Annie began to laugh.

After a pause, the boy continued playing mystified, "If he liked *me* he would have just told me so...wouldn't he?" The boy kept his confused face on as the guru and Annie laughed more. The boy added, "Because, he was...he was out looking for love...so...if he found someone he liked...he would ask them on a date or something...right?...isn't that what people do?"

"People never do that," the guru and Annie resounded in unison.

70

Today the group talked about the beat generation and the hippie movement. To the conversationalists, both groups seemed to form due to common values. They wanted a life that felt more alive...spontaneous. Today, we are in a time of mediocrity. [Am I in need of reasons to cite supporting this conclusion?]

The group felt Mazatlan, as the rest of the world, was largely filled with mediocrity. To them, the upcoming carnival was only further support of this conclusion. A quick glance at the map showed the next town south to be called San Blas. And with that, the planning phase of their next trip was completed. The discussion turned onto Kerouac's "On the Road."

The boy remembered reading the book for the first time when he was in college. One of his friends had just finished it and then passed the copy along to him. After the boy read it, the two discussed their impressions.

The boy's friend was frustrated by the book. He just didn't see what the fuss was about. To him, the characters just seemed restless. They would go to all these different towns but never really do anything new. They just looked for food, alcohol, and sex. Couldn't they do that anywhere? There seemed to be no reason why they were on the road.

To the boy, this critique seemed valid. And at the time, he could offer his friend no response. The boy was wondering the same thing. Why the hell were these people traveling? At the same time as his reading Kerouac, the boy was taking a philosophy course about what to do with your life. He was stumped with that one, too.

Looking back now, the boy feels he might understand Kerouac better. Being thrust in unfamiliar surroundings and forced to navigate is stimulating. It provides a pressure to focus on the present in a way that the average, repetitious, daily life usually does not. But there is more to say about it than that...

The boy travels because of union. [I pause at the keyboard here...and then decide this one is going to need a cigarette for sure...allow it to flow out with ease.]

Union is a bad word.

He travels for the same thing the athletic world has termed "being in the zone." It is an intense connection to the present moment where the mind and body seem almost guided by a heightened awareness. In this "zone" is where athletes perform at their peak. Science may or may not be able to prove the state exists, but numerous athletes have attested to visiting it. And, of course, they only attempt to explain after the moment has passed. They only know they were in the zone. Nobody can say how they got in the zone. Do you know why that is?

[I suppose there might be someone that claims they know how to get in "the zone." Probably a performance psychologist or someone. Whoever they are, I suspect they are overpaid sources of frustration...]

Artists strive for the same thing: An inspired state where creativity flows continuously and uninhibited. In that moment, creation happens without hesitation...almost effortlessly. Afterwards, the artist may be able to comment on *what* inspired them. But they still don't know *how* to become inspired. Only when the moment has passed is there any concern for inspiration.

During the inspired moment, they are too busy doing something...well, more inspired.

To the boy, this state is perhaps most easily accessible through sex. When both partners feel lost to a common energy--their minds calm, yet highly sensitive. There is a simple feeling throughout their entire world that, if put into words might say only: "yes, yes, yes." Life is a perfect harmony.

Yes, yes, yes. [I repeat the words in my head. Now there is a good book title.]

When the boy first read "On the Road," he remembers having a fondness for Kerouac's characterization of Dean Moriarty. Moriarty knew that repeating the same word twice just wasn't enough. You need three of them to give it a beat.

The beat moves us to birth sites of new harmony.

And to the boy, it feels like the group is getting close. Somewhere nearby there is a place pregnant and waiting. It is time to get on the road...again.

Children's Story #3

I was about five years old when I asked my father, "How come you always wake me up when I'm tired and make me go to bed when I'm not?"

His response was, "I don't know."

70.3

Much of the boy's past can be summed up in one mode:

Wanting to do something else.

When he was sitting around he wished he was up and about doing something. When he was doing something, he wished he was sitting around.

He felt as though he never was doing what he wanted.

Nothing changed until one day he realized: What he really wanted to do was to wish he was doing something else.

70.5

[Look around. Did you forget where you are?]

--

People who feel bad for the crippled beggar...the starving child...the elderly invalid--the fly stuck in a web--haven't really felt the beauty of surrendering to an orgasm.

-- Manflesh

--

During their last night in Mazatlan, the group sat outside at a restaurant. The boy talked about one of his friends back in high school. Right after graduation, the friend moved out of his parents house. He wanted nothing more than to go venture out to see more of the world. This desire was something his parents accepted. They had raised him, surely, but they agreed he was old enough to choose how to direct his life. He packed up some stuff in his small car and headed for California. Two months later, he still had not reached the west coast. Apparently, he met some people along the way and got side-tracked.

The boy recalled another family he knew of. A single-mother's 18-year-old daughter had gotten pregnant. The daughter informed her mother that she was going to have the baby and move in with the father. Put simply, the 18-year-old wanted nothing more than to move out of her mothers house and start her own family. After some arguing, the nearly grandmother offered to provide a separate house to help the new family get started. Her

pregnant daughter declined. As far as the boy knew, the now grandmother is still busy structuring her life so that she can raise the granddaughter. And the daughter vigilantly fights off all attempts at her aid.

[transitional blah blah blah omitted intentionally]

Annie excused herself from the table. She came back nearly a half hour later, sporting a happy glow. She had noticed a Mexican boy that was sitting alone. Annie had caught him eying her for hours. She approached with instructions to meet her in the women's restroom. He showed up a few minutes later, and they had a quick fuck.

Annie was more than happy to provide the boy with a little adventure. She was able to say yes to his fantasy when so many others would say no. This boy was given a rare chance to compare this common fantasy with reality.

After hearing Annie recount the event, the boy asked her, "Do you think he enjoyed it?"

Annie responded, "He got really freaked out about halfway through. He actually started to leave and I had to pull him back. I watched his thoughts start spinning out of control. So, I just finished him off with a blowjob. Afterwards, he gave me a shy smile and scurried out as fast as he could." Annie paused and then resumed. "People are so scared to take what they want. It is so silly...preferring a cozy, old dream...yuck."

The guru commented about how special this little group is...being around other people that actually are willing to do what they can to give people what they want. "So much of the world is filled with restrictions. Take the Mexican boy in the bathroom. Who knows what exactly was going through his head

when he was ready to walk out in the middle of having sex with a beautiful woman. Maybe it was fear of pregnancy, disease, getting caught, inadequacy...whatever the voices were in his head, they weren't his. They were the guilt and fear he has been taught to think...all of the do's and don'ts that have been pounded in...well, starting even before age two..."

"Modern culture doesn't understand when structure designed to protect is actually harmful." The guru paused. "There is an old tribal practice of taking a group of members out into the wild each year. They are forced to hunt and eat with their hands...They relearn to be animals...trying to survive. The tribe knows this is a dangerous endeavor. Often times, people end up getting permanently injured or killed. Yet, the tribe continues to do it every year..."

74

San Diego is located in a desert. But within the city you see plenty of green. Most of the water used to irrigate the city comes from the Colorado River. Water use is restricted to the residents of Colorado for conservation purposes...but those living in San Diego have no similar restriction.

Humans create out of an ignorance of natural flows. Of course, these natural flows cannot be stopped. We merely lack the sensitivity to recognize and move with them.

Recent headline on Yahoo!® news (Jan. 2007) - "Global warming 'likely' a reality."

76

The trip to San Blas went exactly as planned because there wasn't really a plan. As usual, the roads and maps in Mexico never quite match up. Due to construction, many of the road signs that would have been helpful seem to have been taken down. So, they had the usual problems finding correct turns. And when you are trying to pull off the road to get your bearings, it may seem that you should pull into areas designed for pulling off the road. First timers, like this group of travelers, may find themselves bottoming out at 60 mph.

But this type of unexpected stuff is to be expected.

77

The travelers arrive in San Blas on a full-moon, Friday evening. After eating, they retired for the night.

The next day, the group talked to a couple vacationing from Wisconsin. The couple seemed to be somewhere in their early fifties. They provided some information on housing and dining in the area. Also, they informed the group that this is "the" weekend to be in San Blas. The town has been in the middle of their yearly celebration all week...with tomorrow being the grand finale.

The retired couple's interest soon is directed towards the guru. They wonder what exactly he does for a living. The guru gives a vague response about being a spiritual teacher and quickly turns the discussion back to the couple. He asks them to explain where they are in their life.

The couple starts by noting that their kids have just entered college. Most of their vacation in Mexico has been spent trying to figure out where to go from here. The wife is reading a book titled "The Magic Number" (or something like that). It is about how to determine when you have saved enough money to live the retired life you want. The couple claims to have a decent amount of money saved but they are too afraid to retire now. The cost of health care in America is their primary concern.

For those that don't know the work/retire plan common in the states and elsewhere, I'll attempt to boil it down into generalities. Almost everyone goes through some amount of schooling. After that, they find a job (work for money.) Then

they work almost every day, sometimes changing jobs, primarily in an attempt to make more money than they use. However, many people run into the problem of using more money as they grow older. Still the hope is that after 35-45 years of working to save money they will have enough extra set aside so they can afford to go "into retirement." Someone "in retirement" is a person who no longer works almost every day to save money for retirement.

During their 35-45 years of work, people often report that they "look forward" to retirement. That is to say, these people like the idea of working towards retirement. It is also another way of saying that they don't like working extra hard for extra money--or, they don't like the idea of working towards retirement.

After spending the majority of their life working towards retirement, many actually get to a point where they finally decide to try it out. But some who try it, find they don't like retirement at all. Then they might go back to work...but they no longer have to work extra hard for the extra money. These people are essentially retired, but may refuse to call themselves "retired." I don't know if these people regret spending 40 or so years working for something...only to finally try it and find they don't like it.

The couple from Wisconsin has been working towards retirement for nearly 40 years. However, they don't know what they want to do when they retire. So this makes it hard for them to determine when exactly they will have enough money for it. Going back to work if they need more money seems to not be an option they wish to consider. Even though, they have no idea

if they will like retirement...it seems they assume they will like it enough to do it until they die.

The boy, being arrogant enough at 26 years of age to assume he understands their situation, explains: "By the time I was in high school, I wasn't passionate about anything. So all my future options seemed the same. I signed up for a college program that made monetary sense at the time--computer engineering. When I got to college, I just did what my teachers told me that would be likely get me more money. After I got my degree, I got a job...and good money. But I found out that I hated the job. The only idea I had was to go back to school and try to get a different career. And while I was going back to school, I figured I should pick one that would make me even more money. So, I picked patent law.

After my second year at law school, I knew I was going through the same thing, again. I had no passion for law, but I was doing it anyway. The only thing keeping me going was money. I had already loaned out \$65,000 for this legal education. So, my head told me to just finish up school and work in the legal field for a few years to get out of debt. Then I thought I could move on to 'something else.' Keep in mind, I had no idea what that 'something else' was. And in the meantime, my plan was still driven by money.

I was starting to slowly learn that I didn't like money all that much. It seemed to be always getting in the way rather than getting me towards what I wanted. But I still didn't know what money was getting *in the way of*. I could never say with zest, 'I want to do _____ with my life.' I could only say with zest, 'I don't want to do _____ just because of money, anymore.' "

[The book would like to clarify that, even after editing, this conversation seems to ramble. Sorry, it is midday in Mexico. I'm a bit unclear how to present my thoughts. Let's attempt a tighter paragraph.]

People put off doing what they want all the time. This often happens because they don't know what they want. In the meantime, these folks do any number of things that drive themselves crazy. I use the word "crazy" because these people rarely even try things they *might* want in order to find out if they *really* want them.

[I re-read my "tight" paragraph.....It is too preachy for my tastes now. But I guess I'm feeling preachy. So it stays.... But let's try another angle:]

Here is how the boy handled not knowing what he wanted: He decided to finish his last year of law school to get the degree. Since he knew he didn't want to be a lawyer now, he didn't have to worry much about his grades. This cut his study time from 50 hours a week down to zero. All he did was attend class and take notes from his professors' lectures. With most of this spare time, he read books and did a lot of thinking about why he couldn't stop thinking. The rest of his spare time was spent with friends or enjoying the outdoors.

He got his law degree (with better grades in his third year than in his first two), but he still didn't know what he wanted. He spent the next six months primarily sitting at coffee shops reading things by other people, talking with other people, or just watching other people.

After all this, he still had yet to come up with an idea of what he wanted for the future. But he did realize that sitting around trying to find what he wanted was exactly what he wanted

to do now. So, he was finally feeling better about his uncertainty. As it went, he would soon be headed for Mexico. Exactly what he didn't know he wanted.

[Ok. That sounds a bit like bragging about the boy. But I wanted to give an example. My point was that it is easy to think you are starting something new and find yourself merely repeating the same old plan. New plans are routinely the product of the old plan...they arise out of the old one. For something new, you must be willing to ditch all your plans. You can't know what something new will look like, because it will be new.]

[WARNING: It seems I'm getting back up on my soap-box...with a megaphone this time:]

Career-minded-plan-for-the-future types, I beseech thee!

How can you plan to do something in the future when you have no way of knowing what you will want? How can you answer accurately what will you want for dinner exactly twenty years from today?

Are you even able to do what you want RIGHT NOW? Do you even know what you want RIGHT NOW?

I'll give you a hint! Do you even know if you are thirsty RIGHT NOW? Did you neglect to notice some simple things? Are you hot or cold, is your back is sore from not sitting straight, need to pee, anything???....Check in on yourself. Listen to what your body says!

Are you hungry right now???...[Ohh...Sorry, I can't resist...If you asked yourself that question every half-hour for the rest of your life, would you gain weight? Or would you loose weight...

[It seems as though I wandered off the topic of retirement. But I'm convinced I didn't. Maybe people should try something out before they decide they want it. People should learn how to find out what they want. Makes sense to me. But that isn't what they do....I guess I don't understand people...I probably shouldn't be the one preaching then. I'm getting off my soap-box, now. Over and out.]]

78

[There are some bland details that happened today. Again, I feel the desire to include them because they actually strike me as an important part of this trip.]

The group looked around San Blas for place a better place to stay. After visiting three different hotels, none of them had availability. Then they talked with a dozen or so people around town. Everyone kept suggesting the same places the group had already checked.

But then there are other things that happened...

At one point during the day, the group ended up driving onto a street to confront a large parade. A police car (the head of the parade) gestured to get them off the road. The boy maneuvered the car as best he could. However, the parade was too wide for the street already. They stopped and sat in the car while hundreds of paraders flowed around each side. Almost every pair of eyes that passed peered into the car--gawking at the group. They had been introduced to the entire city in the span of fifteen minutes.

After four hours of house hunting, the group went back to their current hotel for a nap and then went out on the town. At a bar, they were given more details about the festivities. A huge firework display was to be held that night in the town square. The bar owner suggested that the baby retire before the show began. During the fireworks, it is an accepted practice of pointing rocket propelled explosives towards the onlookers. Part of the firework display is trying to avoid the firework display.

Just outside the bar, two dogs were having sex. A tourist threw part of her meal at them to break up the moment. Whatever she threw, it hit the male dog in the ass. He yelped a little and separated from the female. The tourist went back to eating her food as the dogs paced anxiously.

The guru, Annie, and the baby headed for the hotel just before dark. The boy stayed for the fireworks display that started shortly thereafter. He reports he studied innumerable laws that would prevent such a thing happening in the United States...and that it was a great time.

79

The boy had a dream that concluded with a joke. He tried to wake up enough to write it down before it faded...but he wasn't fast enough. Here's what he remembers. Perhaps you can fill in the missing details:

One man says to another, "I just heard that Tom Petty checked into a treatment center."

[Insert the second man's response]

The first man provides the punchline: "Although, I'm not sure I believe he was born in a laboratory."

The boy swears this joke was hilarious.

--

[I'm brought again to the topic of dreams. Particularly, I'm fascinated yet another time by the common difficulty people have in recognizing when they are currently dreaming.

A critical (or at least experienced) mind should be able to quickly determine what is a dream and what is not. Shouldn't it? Dreams are filled with seemingly impossible events—flying, instant travel to distant lands, characters shift into other people without question, buildings are often quite different from how people know them to exist... I don't know. I could go on, but I don't feel it necessary. Just take a look at any of your dreams after you wake. With all that craziness happening, shouldn't there have been enough clues?

And I'm well aware that people might give some argument about critical thinking portions of the brain being more dormant during dreams. I, and numerous others, have pulled it off.

People that think they are awake just don't seem to suspect it is a dream. And I'm very suspicious of this "waking life." I see so many people with differing views on the world. So many personal dream versions. How much of your waking state is comprised of the same material as dreams? Can you actually trust your answer?]

80

Again the group went hunting around San Blas for a place to live. With no seeming progress this time. They decided to return back to the hotel and pay for another night.

The guru walked into the hotel courtyard in search of the owner. One of the maids was cleaning near the entryway and pointed towards one of the hotel rooms marked "manager." The guru opened up the door only to quickly close it. Annie and the boy sat in the car, watching the guru wait with a giggle.

After a few moments, the manager's room door reopened. The guru had a short conversation and walked back to the car with a huge grin. He jumped into the car and relayed the details, "I just walked in on the manager having sex with a Mexican boy. Hehehee."

Annie, "Oh my god."

"Yeah, I just opened the door without knocking. There was this little boy with his head buried in that old lady's breasts. He jumped and scrambled to find his pants. I apologized and then waited outside...hehehehe...oh, yeah. They have a room for us. And I've been instructed not to tell anyone about the owner having sex."

After settling in a room, the group went back out to the town square. Shortly thereafter, a person approached and said he knew of a place to rent. They set up an appointment later the next day.

Currently, the boy is back in the hotel room and typing away. The backdrop of his computer display also includes Annie and the guru fucking away. It is a standard missionary position

modified by one of Annie's legs up in the air...her left hand holding the back of her left knee. There are no words between the two...just the sound of a kiss and moaning now and then.

Earlier in the day, conversation involved three main points. One was on the topic of "the guru." In India, the guru is often held in such high regard that devotees and the guru *cannot* actually be friends. While this is a huge roadblock to understanding, the guru points out a beauty in it. The relationship has a mutual honor the guru terms "rare" in the US and England.

The second topic has to do with so called "enlightenment experiences." There was a man that told the group his story about coming close to death. He recalled the classic bright light at the end of the tunnel and meeting Jesus there. After the man left, the guru explained that such an experience can often bring someone close to a state where all thought stops. To him, any familiar characters or places are mind created. So, this individual remained in something imaginary and interpreted it as real.

[Sorry, I'm losing my concentration. Annie and the guru are really going right now. Wish you could see this.]

Another problem is that after a person comes back from one of these experiences, they often attach importance to them. The event leaves such an impact that the person ends up replaying it in his or her memory. In a sense, they become addicted to remembering the experience.

[Sorry, there was a loud bang outside and the power just went out. Sounds like a transformer or something blew. Now I sit in the dark. The light from the laptop screen blinds me as

to what the guru and Annie are doing. All I hear are some sinister giggles coming from the guru.]

So, to repeat, these people are now convinced they have "seen the light." And that creates another trap that keeps the individual from seeing the world as it really is. Self-importance is attached to the self-created imagery. Now there is an eagerness to share the story with others. The desire to share is often a self-compliment for getting a personal letter addressed from their god (or whatever else).

These experiences, which could be quite liberating, turn into something quite harmful to anyone who wants liberation from their own mind. The mind quickly rushes in and takes ownership of the event and is back in control....

On a semi-related note, some Buddhists are known not to celebrate birthdays. To them, the fact you were born indicates that you missed the point in your previous life.

And the third topic was...can you guess??? Dreams. The boy explained the seeming paradox of not being able to know when you are dreaming. His dream character--"the boy"--has exactly the same fears, desires, and history as the one in his waking state. Yet in dreams, the boy just seems to go along with each improbable scenario without much issue. If things were to change so rapidly and drastically in the waking state, the boy suspects he would be frozen by confusion.

What the group came up with was that there is another perspective the boy has yet to take into consideration. In a dreamland, there is the content of the dream and then the dreamer. The dreamer continues along undisturbed despite what happens to the characters.

[Sorry, gotta go. Annie just showed up out of the darkness and she wants more sex. An unexpected new scene, new characters, new activities...sounds a lot like a dream...why am I not disturbed???

81

Today, the group just got back from looking at a house for rent. The advertisement boasted this "exclusive beach property" (translation: you can see the ocean from the roof) was a "bargain" (rip-off) including rare amenities such as a "marble tiled office" (marble garage floor where the owner is storing an old boat that doesn't work, lawn mowers leaking oil, and a family of rats that live within a rusty paint can pile). The advertisement made no mention of the property being neglected for over twenty years.

They sit back in their hotel room...the boy on one bed...Annie crying in the guru's arms on the other. The boy attempted to inquire about Annie's mood. She responded with an initial look of exasperation, as if he had just asked the impossible.

But, after a few moments, she calms herself enough to attempt an explanation. She describes it as an intense feeling of longing. There is a strong desire...for nothing specific, really...just to be at peace. To be in a place that doesn't reject her so readily. Annie breaks down again before getting any further...

The guru continues to hold Annie in his arms while she sobs. The boy sits in silence--watching the scene intensely. The strength of attention within the room is vividly sobering. It only takes a few seconds until Annie is wiping her eyes and is back to sharing with the group.

The guru starts the conversation again, "I've seen this [emotion] many times...in many different people. A wide variety

of situations can spark it. And a situation that seems like it will spark it, often doesn't. This [emotion] is very nebulous and deep-seeded. I don't think there is a word for it in English that is accurate."

Annie's face shows a slight frustration with the discussion. She jumps in when the guru is taking a breath. "Every word is entirely inadequate. And I can't point to any cause. It has sooo little to do with our current situation. This feeling...I remember having it since I was a young girl. It's been there for as long as I remember. I don't think it ever goes away. I feels like it is always in the background. It's just...every once in a while...it makes it to the surface."

The guru adds, "One day, she will get to a place where the energy will still be there...but she will no longer identified with it. That is what I think of when I use the words transcendence or transmutation. Life goes on the same way, but it does not affect you in the same way. Use the analogy of the ocean: The waves come and go on the surface, but deep down you remain undisturbed."

...

Later this day, the boy listened as a young child in a nearby hotel room threw a tantrum. The boy didn't know the specifics of what sparked the fit, but he knows the frustration. It was the same feeling he sensed when Annie was crying. It is the same emotion that seems to be everywhere today. Nearly ever face in San Blas visibly told the precise words this young child's parents were screaming: "What is wrong?!"

Today the world knows something is out of order. It attempts to ease the discomfort within the distraction of known activity.

The vacationers retreat to their hotel.
The child is given a familiar toy.
Reassuringly we comfort ourselves, "We know this day."
The thinkers think.
The meditators meditate.
"We know this day."
The workers work.
The entertainers entertain.
The sick sicken.
"We know this day."
Eat, drink, and sleep to forget
that we know this day.

Today, we all caught a glimpse into empty shells amiss. And we lashed out subtly in denial by merely waiting for the insight to fade. Today, we wounded the world with our everyday.

A soothing recipe for times like these:

Familiar Ginger, Lemon, Honey

- One- half pinky finger of fresh ginger
- Juice of half a small lemon
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 8 oz. boiling water

Cut the ginger into thin strips. Add the ginger, lemon juice, and honey to the bottom of a glass. Top with the boiling water. Stir well and steep for 3 minutes. Sip while thinking "I know this day."

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The group sat down for breakfast at a restaurant. They mentioned to the owner that they were looking for a place to rent for a month...maybe longer. The owner said he would make some phone calls after he took their order. As the group was discussing how nice it would be to have a kitchen, the couple at the next table must have overheard. They introduced themselves and mentioned that they were currently renting a nice three-bedroom apartment. The only drawback was a parrot owned by the family downstairs--it liked to squawk through the wee hours of the morning. (The man [husband???] said as a grinning side-note: the parrot's favorite word happens to be his first name.) On the positive side for our group, the couple planned on leaving town the next day. The apartment would be available if they wanted it.

The group got directions to stop by and see the apartment after they finished breakfast. The couple excused themselves after a pleasant good-bye and left the restaurant. After the couple exited, the group had a short chat about the encounter. They all had a good feeling about these people...and the apartment. They were nearly certain they had finally found their new home.

Annie had a strange feeling about the couple, though. She asked the guru, "Are they married?"

He responded confidently, "Yes...but, I think they sleep in separate beds."

"Huh. You think so? No sex? I guess that's what I felt. They seemed like business partners."

"Yeah, they probably stay together because one of them has money. But they both want a travel companion and likely work together. Probably they are building some small business they are both proud of...one of those 'save the environment' type projects. They focus on work while knowing their love for each other has fizzled out. Perhaps they wanted children but couldn't have one...and that helped kill the passion. I wouldn't be surprised if they compensate for not having children by picking up hitchhikers...giving people in need a job...stuff like that."

"Huh...how do you know all this stuff?"

The guru shrugged his shoulders with a grin. "I don't know. I just know."

The conversation died while the boy lit up a cigarette. He was on his first puff when the food came out. He tamped out the cigarette after a second exhale and arranged his food. On his first bite, a young girl came walking through the door. He chewed as he watched her sit down. She was about twenty...or maybe thirty years old, blonde, and deeply tanned. She looked like a surfer type...probably living on the beach, the boy concluded. He took a second bite of his food, chewed, and swallowed. Then he got up from his food and approached her with sexual intentions on his brain.

He introduced himself, using a request for simple information as an opening. He inquired if she knew where he might find a surfboard for rent. She responded that she didn't surf, but she knows the surf shop at the beach rents boards. The conversation quickly veered off surfing...which neither of them cared about. Each disclosed a bit of their history and

what they actually enjoy doing. And the boy got her impressions about the town.

He also found out that she was currently living with the couple that just left. She had been drifting around Mexico, not knowing what to do with her life. She was low on money and sleeping on the beach. At that point, the couple approached her and offered her their spare bedroom...free of charge. They also invited her to live and work with them in Vancouver. She accepted and would be leaving with them tomorrow.

The boy said maybe they would see each other again when he would come by to see the apartment. Then he excused himself and went back to his food. As he sat down, he gave the guru a suspicious look. The guru's analysis of the couple was impressive. They picked up a surrogate daughter in Mexico and were trying to get her "back on her feet." Something else the girl had said struck him. "Their spare bedroom..."spare bedroom...singular. He recalled that it was a three bedroom apartment. Could it be that the guru was right about the couple sleeping in separate rooms, too?

The boy isn't sure how long he sat staring at the guru in contemplation. The guru had his head down the entire time...focused on eating his eggs. The only gesture the guru made was an almost imperceptible shrug. This shocked the boy out of his thoughts, and he went back to eating. As he took his first bite, the guru began laughing loudly. The boy gave a little chuckle and shook his head. He made it to his second bite when Annie inquired, "What are you two laughing at?"

Both the guru and the boy shrugged their shoulders at her simultaneously. They burst into more laughter as Annie looked at them curiously.

Annie shook her head at them and went back to take a bite when she burst out laughing. The three gave each other various gestures of confusion for the next few minutes...each gesture causing them to laugh more and more hysterically.

By the time they had calmed themselves and finished eating, the young blond girl had paid for her coffee and left. The boy shared the information he had gotten about the girl. The guru asked, "What was your impression of her?"

The boy responded, "I think she has been traveling for quite some time. She was disillusioned with the world and didn't like how she saw everyone spending their days. Perhaps there was an event that spurred her travels. Maybe a bad break up, maybe some trouble with the law, or problems at home. Nonetheless, she has been disappointed to still feel the same in Mexico as she did back home.

She probably tried to get a life started in Mexico a few times...but only because her mind wouldn't let her sit around doing nothing. But these projects didn't take off right away and she was all too willing to give up on them. A change of plans feels like another defeat to her.

She is actually going to Vancouver to work with that couple that has the apartment. Judging from her tone, she expects to carry her disappointment to yet another country."

After paying the bill, the group went to the apartment. The parrot was waiting in a cage just inside the door. It began to squawk and the couple soon descended the interior stairs to let them in.

The group had decided within seconds to take the place, but they went along with the tour, anyway. There was a front balcony off the living room, three similar bedrooms in a row

down one side of the house, and a hallway down the other side leading to the adequate kitchen. A clean bathroom was behind the kitchen forming the rear of the building.

After the tour, everyone sat in the living room area and chatted. It came out that the couple met in some sort of hippie commune. They both shared the same dream of developing and selling eco-friendly housing. They also like yoga and food labeled as healthy.

The guru explained that they were a group of spiritual teachers. He gave the standard spiel: The problem is one's identification with the mind. To break the identification you have to stop thinking. But it is hard to recognize something you don't think you do all the time. So he lives with his students in an effort to help them gain perspective.

After some more chit chat, the group excused themselves and the boy found the Mexican family downstairs. He paid for one month's rent and they returned to their hotel room with a happy glow of success. On the way home, they agreed that each of the three bedrooms were obviously being slept in.

[Today, I am struck by how similar everyone is. We all look for peace, happiness, love, and fulfillment. And this hunt takes us all through the similar stages. There is some dreaming of a better life, and then the attempts to make the dream real. These attempts are confronted with the reality of what is and are somewhat thwarted. Our dreams never actually pan out as envisioned. Even though trying to make a dream into reality routinely doesn't happen, we update our dream and begin the hunt all over again.

Sure, the details are different for each person. For example, when a person finds out his or her dream isn't really

happening, some react with anger...others with sadness...others with.... But these are just different reactions to the same loop. These emotions drive further dreaming.

Yet, I see so many people that don't seem to suspect their own dreaming as the cause of their struggle. Often instead, the blame is placed on a personal vision of the outside world. Society is at fault (i.e. we treat the environment incorrectly), certain individuals are a problem (i.e. he or she did this and that is why _____), or we see ourselves as the problem (i.e. I wish I was more such and such). The last one seems different, but I doubt that it actually is. Even though a person blames his or her own self, that self is dream character relative to others imagined to exist in an outside world.

Again, if we saw that we were doing this to ourselves, wouldn't we stop?...Oh, silly minds we have...do they continue on?... Dreaming up why we cannot stop...dreaming about how to stop dreaming?]

83

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Nobody knows...because-a-because-a-BE-cause...

-- A Spanish Gypsy

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I do not doubt that more than a few individuals have stumbled upon reality without much help. Eckhart Tolle's own story involves many years depression up to a contemplation of suicide. Instead of committing suicide (or committing a failed suicide), he somehow caught the schism in his head. He puzzled over whether his true self was the homicidal maniac or the maniac's target. He reports his silly thoughts finally collapsing under this pressure--without being educated about, what he would later term, "enlightenment."

Some people may just be more prone to snapping out of unreality. And for some, it may be an advantage that they aren't knowingly on a spiritual search:

The group sat next to a man from Canada. He clearly had found a considerable amount of peace in this word. It was obvious by his comfort within his own skin. He was a hard working, self-made man...you know...the type that built considerable wealth up from very little. In Mexico, he was helping a friend on a real estate project. Back home, he had two kids with his wife...over their four pregnancies. His oldest boy, was 18 and currently in Bangkok on the generosity of

a stranger he met at the airport. What would have been the next oldest child, drowned at the family cabin. He had a 12 year-old at home. The would-be youngest child was an aborted fetus.

The man was refreshingly blunt and honest about how he saw the world. "I'm a self-centered man. I always put my own happiness above my family's desires. If I didn't, they would just take advantage of me. They are too much like me."

He was another person reporting a "near death" experience...Actually, he was convinced that he had a series of three "death" experiences while in the hospital during heart problems. "It seemed like a calm black hole," he states factually. "The first two times, I was anxious about it...and the experience seemed to pass in an instant. But by the third time, I knew what was coming. So, I didn't fight as much. And when I came back, the first thing I said was to the doctor's face hovering over me, 'You know, you are playing God here.'"

The Canadian man says, on that third occasion, he didn't really want to come back.

The boy took this as an example of a "non-spiritual" type recognizing an experience for what it was. After the experience, however, he turned something he didn't do into his own accomplishment. There was a smugness on his face that slowly became revealed as he told his story. And the story itself was told in a way that the listener can assume he had told it many times before.

The Canadian used the experience to justify his old, selfish ways. He hadn't changed a bit. He's "just out to enjoy life because you never know when it will end." He partakes dangerous activities because it gives him an "in" with the younger crowd. Also, he didn't like staying in San Blas for very long because

there weren't many "single twenty-somethings" around. He and his friends "still feel like we are in high-school." His spiritual life just turned into another thing he could brag about to help increase his popularity amongst the "cool" kids.

What the man didn't seem to think was maybe these "near death" experiences aren't special. Might anyone who meditates long enough on willing themselves to death experience something similar?

The most common spiritual pitfall is convincing yourself that you know something...seeing yourself as "higher" than the next. Trungpa Rinpoche warned his professional students about this. He termed the mindset as one of "spiritual materialism."

In countries all over the world, there are plenty of folks that will tell you what is wrong with you and what to do about it (for a fee)...Now, there is nothing wrong with giving your money away. It can be one of the most potent spiritual practices (especially for those who worry about money.) But what we are talking about here is finding a person that can help with more than just an attachment to printed-paper.

Wow, do you see the trap?

We feel horrible, so we suspect something is wrong. Next, we start searching for the cause and that only leads to the same horrible feeling. Then we look for help. But we never fully realize that the seeker continually creates our own problem, and the only way to end the cycle is by fixing ourselves.

But fixing ourselves is tough, painful and confusing...isn't there someone that can help?

Sure there is!

I know!! I know!! I can help!!!

(First, send me your money.)

83 (cont.)

I'm at awe with the number of spiritual books on the market today. Multiplying alongside those are the meditation centers, yoga instructors, multi-denominational churches, etc.

I take all this to mean that many people are confused and pained by their life...And the business of telling people what is wrong with them is profitable.

Here, I'll tell you what is wrong: We begin to realize we are confused about who we really are. This leads us on a search for truth. That search, if done honestly, causes more confusion. The only way out is to realize the confusion is make believe.

There...Now what is that going to do for anyone?

[sigh]

The spiritual world is becoming technocratic. The big heads are migrating to next great system. Same stadium and the same rules, but we call it a different game because the uniforms look different.

Everywhere there are people that seem to know. I wonder if these know-it-alls have a life outside one that "seems to know?" Are they pained when they loose a potential student to teach and preach at? Do they promote freedom or merely shift dependency their direction?

How do these people behave when nobody is watching?

Ever wonder what these people dream about?

The boy was walking through a field when someone started shooting at him. He dropped down on the ground to make himself a smaller target. He determined the shots to be coming from a

far-off, wooded area. He spotted a lone, nearby tree and quickly crawled behind it for cover. The boy got out his binoculars and peered around the trunk of the tree--trying to locate the shooter. Another shot whizzed past, and the boy ducked back behind the tree.

The boy noticed a small typewriter somehow next to him. He placed it in his lap and began to type his own name. He was halfway through his last name when the typewriter began to fail. One letter would not work...no matter how hard he pressed on the key.

When he looked up from the typewriter keys, he realized he had been transported to an office room of celebrities. There were thousands of them--each sitting at their individual computer screen. An instructor at the front of the class was going over some procedure. She was gesturing to a projected screen with a hand-held pointer.

The boy sat down at a computer and began. Again, he tried typing his name. No luck. An error message came back. The computer system informed him that his login name was "not recognized." He would have to register. After filling out some information, he tried another time...but got a different error message. This time, the computer was asking for his credit card information. A helpful whisper from someone off to his left said, "Just unplug the computer and reboot to get around that."

The boy searched underneath the table for the electrical outlet but soon realized that he was back in the grass field. Another shot whizzed past his head. He spotted a small hill that might provide better cover. He hopped up and made a run for it...the typewriter firmly under his arm. Two shots barely

missed before he flopped back down. Then he made another rushed attempt at typing his last name...it still didn't work.

He wanted to get a better peek at the shooter, but he lost the binoculars somewhere. He decided he must have left them behind the tree...he would have to go back for them. He jumped up again...running as fast as he could. While he ran, he scanned the area behind the tree. The binoculars were nowhere to be found. Luckily, during this last scamper, no shot were fired at him. He thought, "Maybe the shooter is on the move, too."

The boy kept on running...creating more distance between him and his hideout. He rounded another little grove of trees to find a man with a rifle slung over his shoulder...running straight at him. The shooter was startled by the boy's sudden appearance and fumbled to raise his rifle. The boy saw the opportunity and took it. He wound up to punch the shooter...but at that moment the boy woke up.

The boy lied still in his bed...still lingering in his mind was the expression on the shooter's face: jolly like a little kid at play.

A cough came from the next bedroom over. The guru was awake. The boy got up to pee and walked into the guru's bedroom. Annie was feeding the baby on the bed and slid over a little so he could sit down. The boy said "good morning" and recalled the dream as best he could. This was what Annie and the guru had to say about the dream:

Actually, they didn't say anything because the boy never went over to talk about the dream. The boy just woke up and wrote this instead:

"I believe dreams can be a very rich resource for the spiritual journey. Generally, they can clearly illustrate how muddled and untrustworthy the human mind is. Also, dreams often provide hints into the dreamer's neurotic tendencies. (In the boy's case, a desire to be recognized as someone who "knows," self doubt, and a belief that others are getting in the way.)

However, once a person has delved into their neuroses, there is really no use to dwell in mulling them over again and again. At this point, just recognize them for what they are and drop them as quickly as possible. It is time to stop letting them control you. Move on."

Maybe you've heard this one in some form or another:

A student approached a great master and said, "I have left my family, my friends, my life of worldly possessions, all of my previous teachings...everything. I gave this all away only so I could ask to become your student."

The master gazed deep into the student's eyes. "I can see you have honestly done what you claim...very well. I will take you on as my student. Your one and only task is to perfect a meditation posture...the one in which I realized my enlightenment."

The student spent every waking hour possible in the meditation. The master only visited the student to make minor posture corrections.

One day after three years had past, the master came by to criticize the position of the student's left hand. The student responded, "Master, you are mistaken. I am certain my hand is in the correct position."

The master responded, "I can see that you have honestly done what you claim. Congratulations, you have perfected my posture...Now *that* is your problem."

People often make the mistake of turning spiritual practices into another neurotic habit. If you find yourself repeating the same solution to the same problem, the solution is your problem.

End the search. End the doubt. Move on to what you want.

Here is another meditation (hehehehehe):

Manflesh Meditation #000,836,209:

- Lie on your back. Close your eyes. Breathe deep and slow. Let your thoughts calm.
- Within your brain, there is actually a decent amount of fluid and gas moving about. Concentrate on imagining that you can actually feel the chemical activity taking place within your skull.
- Note to yourself: There are also a number of impurities within your brain. Imagine these impurities consisting of both a thick sludge and a poisonous gas. These impurities are the byproducts of vigorous thought. Your body naturally removes impurities...but it has some difficulty in keeping up with a busy mind. To purify your brain effectively, you need to calm your thoughts and allow you to heal.
- Feel gravity pulling the thick sludge down. You should be able to sense the goop seeping from the inner recesses of your brain and collecting in the back of your skull. Focus on this process until your head feels very heavy.

- Next, concentrate on the poison gas bubbling skyward. Again, feel it wind out of the interior of your coiled brain, up to the front of your skull. Continue this visualization until you intensely feel your head pulled skyward.
- There is still more gas and sludge in your brain that can be isolated. Repeat each collection process a few more times. When you notice you are loosing your focus, you might use that as your indication to switch between collecting sludge and gas. Finally, when you feel that you have collected sizable amounts of both contaminants, then move on to the next step.
- Try to feel both the gas pocket and the sludge pool simultaneously. Just lay there for a while, observing the opposing pressures they create. It will be necessary to surrender to any discomfort you may feel.
- The next stage is the most critical. It requires you to generate a considerable amount of mental magic. Your task is to transform the physical nature of these contaminants in order to remove them from your body. Here is how you do it: Physically alter the pool of thick sludge into the sensation of pure space. As an aid, note that you cannot feel the precise boundary of the back of your skull. The weight in the back of your head is actually the sensation of the space that includes the pillow and your head. Similarly, transform the gas pocket into pure radiant energy. Again pay attention to the sensation in your forehead. Observe how the sensation's boundary is fuzzy. Allow you mental assumptions of a precise boundary to break down and stretch the energy connection outward.

- Now, if you can, continue to perform both transformations simultaneously. This requires your attention to be centered within your interior. Note that you cannot do this if your focus is specific...it will need to be more of a general awareness than concentration upon a particular point.
- Next, open your eyes, but suspend your desire to focus on anything in particular. Instead, maintain your awareness of the physical sensations surrounding your skull. Adding your vision to your sensations should help the assumed boundary of your skull further break down. You should feel the light spread further out of your forehead... space should seep out wider and deeper from the back of your skull. Your vision should be clear, and at the same time, there should be no analysis directed towards objects around you.
- Allow both the light and space continue to flow out. They should both envelop you completely. Any sound will seem to pass straight through you without the normal desire to catch it in a thought. You needn't think about anything you sense. You are just empty space and light at this point.
- Continue to expand the light and space from within you. Feel your entire body as a single energetic field within this space that connects and contains all you feel, see, and hear. Close your eyes again if you wish. Allow yourself to relax into spacious radiation.
- Stay in peaceful relaxation as long as you like.
- Before getting up, take a moment to look around, again. Acknowledge that everything you perceive shares and exists

within the space and light you created. Accept every object as part of you. Notice how natural and refreshed you feel in acceptance of your connection to all.

- Attempt to maintain some awareness of this sensation throughout your day. Watch vigilantly for thoughts in your head that simultaneously close down your spaciousness and radiation. Dismiss these thoughts as soon as you are aware of them and notice the lovely affirmation of spacious radiation returning. Notice how capable you are in your daily activities by handling them as they arise and without care of future outcomes.
- The trick is to allow yourself to exist peacefully as a dependent source. Remember to check in on yourself in order to notice when you have lost it. Then let yourself remember that feeling.

Manflesh Meditation Questions #000,836,209:

- If during this meditation, you find a state of openness and peace, ask yourself: "Why would you ever let anything take this state away from you?"
- If, after finding it, you lost it: "What tripped you up? Is there any reason you could not have dealt with that situation from within the open and peaceful state? If you simply don't trust that you could artfully handle everything life presents you spontaneously, why don't you just try it for a while?"
- Are you amazed to see how *unaware* you are of losing this lovely feeling, yet how *aware* you are of regaining it?

Manflesh Meditation Shazam #000,836,209:

- This meditation is a bit complicated. It requires a good amount of imagination and concentration. It is not for everyone. If you tried it but didn't like it, that is just fine.
- If you tried this meditation and liked it, now that is your problem.

86

Time for coffee.

87

The group went out for breakfast one morning. The owner of the restaurant is getting to know the group fairly well--they have been in three different times now. Breakfast proceeds as often their breakfasts do. Slow eating, a few cigarettes, and a few coffee refills beyond the average. Before they leave, the group requests a Bob Marley song on the stereo.

The guru recollects seeing Bob Marley perform once in Kingstown. His restaurant impersonation involves frequent hair petting to clear the face, bent knees, a skyward gaze, and a nearly continuous head wobble that causes hair to cover the face. After the impersonation, the guru recalls the era when Bob Marley began to become famous at a global scale. The guru suspects fame may have gotten to Bob, especially the press' fixation on the whole "multiple wives" thing. Despite any issues with fame, the guru imagined that Bob always remained truly happy when playing his music.

The guru went on to note Bob was regarded as a living profit to his own people—a spokesman of love for the Rastafarian religious. And to the rest of the world, he was a pot smoking sex-addict. Funny how opinions can differ.

Later that evening, the group went to the bar. Playing on the bar's stereo were bossanova covers of Bob Marley songs. One woman at the bar asked the boy, "Do you like Bob Marley?"

In his head he was thinking, "Yes, it is great background music for attracting depressed tourists with disposable income." He was sick of Bob Marley. It was playing everywhere they went. Yet, out of his mouth instead came an "of course."

She responded with "me, too" and went back to her drink.

Sometimes the best way to get through something is to simply say yes to it.

89

The group sat around one morning chatting and sipping on coffee. After the first sip, the guru set his drink down quickly. "A bit too strong," he said after smacking his lips. Then he noticed that he had added milk to the coffee, but never gave it a stir. The boy said he would grab a spoon from the kitchen, but the guru was already stirring away. The guru had picked up the case for his reading glasses, took the glasses out, and was now using the case to mix the coffee. After draining the case back into the cup, he took a sip and said with a grin, "Perfect!"

During this coffee stirring display, the boy became enlightened. The universe in all its mystery became instantly clear. He would later write about this experience and disclose, to the entire world of the future, exactly how he became Buddha.

Sometime in the years to come, thousands of dutiful monks will stir their caffeinated or non-caffeinated drinks with cases for reading glasses. While draining the remaining liquid from the case back into their drink, they will offer their prayers to the universe so they may also discover the ultimate truth.

Sound ridiculous? It is...in exactly the same way every other spiritual practice is. Even so, this is *not* a knock on spiritual seekers. Once people recognize they are lost, the natural reaction is to start seeking a way out. The problem is that there are plenty of methods readily available. (often for a fee I remind you as selling ideas can have remarkably low overhead!)

But instead of taking up another method, maybe a seeker could try living with a guru? [Beware...sales pitch coming...] Even if at some monetary expense, might living gurus differ from any other method? Is it possible the guru might be able to direct attention to something not fully recognized within that moment? Is it possible the guru can say, "yes, that is it" in order to highlight a moment that would otherwise be ignored? Is it possible the guru can steer a person clear traps that the student doesn't recognize as the same old hang ups? Can the guru help build the confidence to continue on...rather than turn back? Does a living example of spontaneous peace provide a unique energy that a student may draw from? Even if the guru is a fraud, are you any worse off than you were?

Once you start seeking, you have to go through it fully...so you can finally leave it behind. And anyone who has been on an honest spiritual quest, whether they term it that or not, comes to a point where they think their search is a farce. For those that keep going, they find out all of life is a joke. And, as far as jokes go, some of the funniest are the ones people take seriously. Put another way, spiritual seekers are seriously funny. This is why many gurus seem to have bladder control problems. They often have to run to the bathroom when they don't want to laugh in their students' face.

So, spiritual people will continue with their search because they feel that they must. They will continue reading books and spending hours in meditation, yoga...whatever. And there are others that will search for a true guru. Some might even find one. And some of those might even live with one. And some will stir their coffee.

Important note to the future: It was a silver case for the reading glasses! And stir clockwise! Keep your spine straight...oh, and don't forget to breathe!!

Another note: When having a secret giggle in the shitter...one must be careful. Modern shitter design has a tendency to echo loudly. Thankfully, there are numerous other methods of giggle masking. However, The Book will not delve into each one...I feel the correct method is primarily a combination of the specific situation and the giggler's personal, artistic preference. I sincerely wish everyone the best on their own development of this spontaneous, highly advanced, and essential yoga.

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Is it possible to think without thinking the thoughts are yours?

Children's Story #4

I sit alone at the dinner table, again. The rest of my family had finished their meal nearly a half hour ago. I stare at the half eaten plate of food given to me. As I push around cold chunks of beef, potato, and carrot; I sit mulling over my sister's voice from the other room. "Just eat it, you cry-baby."

I hate pot roast. Not only do I hate pot roast, I hate pot roast *night*. Every time, I end up sitting at this table...not allowed to leave until I finish...every...last...bite. Pot roast night never goes away. And Mother knows how much I hate it. Yet she makes this night happen once a week.

Oh, man...here she comes to yell at me...again.

"Hun, why don't you just finish your dinner?" She continues with a sigh, "We have been through this a thousand times."

"But, I don't like it. And you know I don't like it...Why do you make me eat it?"

"You know that you have to finish your dinner. Stop stalling."

"But, why?"

"Just eat it!"

Mother snatches my fork and knife out of my hands...She starts cutting up the beef into smaller pieces...With every saw, I see the number of bites remaining multiply...Her hands are hasty...Little scraps of beef scatter about the plate...One piece gets flicked onto the table...I watch her fingers grab it and throw it back down on the plate...The knife and fork go back to work sawing up other chunks.

Finally the utensils slow down, and they scoop scattered beef back into a single pile. I hear Mother sigh again, somewhere above me. The knife and fork slam down on the plate. A sharp clang pierces my ears and tenses up my shoulders. Mother storms off to finish the dishes. I don't once glance up at her; my stare stays fixated on my plate.

[Years later, I realize that Mother hated pot roast night, too. But I still don't know why she made it so often.]

Now it is my turn to sigh as I pick up my fork. I push around a few chunks and notice one covered in glistening fat. I attempt to cut the fat off the best I can. But the meat is tough and cold. My butter knife never does this job well. The best method I have devised is to try pinching the fat with the knife, then I pull the meat away with my fork, and try to rip the meat and fat apart. It never comes off completely; but thankfully, I do fairly well this time. I stare at the meat for a moment and then place it into my mouth.

The first few times I bite down are difficult. My back teeth aren't quite sharp enough to poke through the pot roast. My jaw muscles strain. I don't want to use my front teeth because it forces the tip of my tongue to taste the meat more intensely. So, I attempt to grind the flesh with my back teeth--keeping my tongue as far away as possible. I must be careful that the teeth on the other side of my mouth don't bite down on my tongue. My cheek muscles are also starting to strain from my facial contortions.

I concede by moving the meat back to the front of my mouth. My tongue now feels too big for my mouth...I bite down a few more times with my front teeth managing to separate the piece into three smaller portions while keeping my tongue safe. Two

of these, I tuck into my upper left cheek while I work on the third with the right side molars.

I chomp and chomp as I feel my jaw muscles continue to ache. The meat is the consistency of bubble gum and will not separate any further. Some salty saliva leaks down from the meat in my upper left cheek. As it runs down my teeth, it feels like my gums are bleeding. The feeling brings with it distasteful memories of sitting in the dentist chair just after having my teeth violently flossed.

I stop chewing a while to swallow the saliva. As I do this, my tongue seems to grow even bigger. I am slightly frightened that it will soon fill my entire mouth.

I notice that my mouth is really dry. As I go back to work on the meat, the chewing gum is beginning to harden.

I grasp for my glass of water and take a small sip. My mouth swishes the water around trying to get the meat to soak up some moisture. The chewing gum softens quickly and I see the opportunity. I take another big drink of water and attempt to swallow the gum like a pill. It hurts my throat a little as it slides by, but the pain passes quickly. I sit in a brief moment of relief.

I dispose of the two remaining pieces in the same fashion. My jaw continues to ache more; my mouth continues to dry out more quickly. But I get another moment of relief with my empty mouth cleaned out by a chug of water that finishes off the glass. I yell to Mother for some more water. I wouldn't dare to get up from the table on pot roast night.

Mother comes by rather quickly and takes my glass back to the sink. My stare never moves from my plate. I see at least twenty more pieces of meat sitting there. Out of the corner of

my eye, I soon see the water glass slam down before me. It sloshes but doesn't quite spill.

For the next half an hour, I continue to work on my chunks. I get more and more meticulous about removing the fat. And chewing each piece gets more complicated. Eventually, my mouth is so dry that every drop of moisture in the cold meat is replaced with even colder drinking water. Any saliva I can still produce is immediately washed away by my frequent sips of water.

Then I let out my first gag...I know this stage well.

I manage to get down one more chunk before I gag a second time. Then the gags come after every few times I chew. Before long, I'm gagging multiple times for every time I bite down.

Finally, Mother comes over in a huff.

"Ok, go wash up."

91

Today, a crippled man was standing near a crosswalk. A tourist went up to him and offered him help across the street. He accepted with a large grin, and they crossed together slowly. He held tightly onto her arm. After crossing, the man attempted to strike up a conversation without letting go. After the second or third question, she slyly wriggled out of his grasp. She stayed and talked for a few more minutes, but her body language screamed what she didn't have the guts to say. She wanted nothing more than to get away from this guy.

He was a dirty-old man...drunk and at least thirty years her elder. She was a twenty something with the glow of freshly washed skin. As the man's questions continued on, her attitude changed from annoyed...to disgusted...to pity.

[At this point, I realized that I listed two adjectives and a noun in the sentence above. So, this writing being a learning experience for me, I looked up "pity" in the thesaurus. The synonyms suggested were along the lines of empathy, kindness, and philanthropy. I don't know what kind of English I speak, but it isn't the same one this thesaurus uses. All of its suggestions seem more like antonyms to me...]

This girl helped the man because she felt sorry for him. He made her feel pity...pitiful...even shameful. I didn't see any "kindness" in this girl's "philanthropy." This was not a generous act. It was an obligation.

"Happy birthday!"

"I love your new haircut."

"Thank you. Have a nice day."

[What results when a young girl riddled with guilt and a crippled, lonely man cross paths: Is that a correct definition of "kindness?"]

At the bar the group frequents, the owner has been eying Annie every time she comes in. This time, she decided to approach him. He kept whispering into her ear comments like: "Oh, what I would do if I could get you away from those other two. I would rock your world."

Annie informed him, although she was in fact the guru's "wife," their marriage was "open". The owner responded that he was happy to learn these details; in fact, he was going to show her "how a *real* man fucked."

After listening to him continue on for a while, Annie suddenly gets up from the bar stool and drags the owner upstairs. She lays down on the vacant floor and spreads her legs wide open. But the bar owner hesitates. He makes an excuse about the possibility of them getting caught. Annie comments about how little it matters if they got caught by anyone. The owner remains unconvinced. Instead, he wants to take her back to his place. Annie declines but suggests that he come by her place...that is, if he actually wanted to fuck. A short while later, the guru, Annie, and the baby head home.

Back in the bar, the boy was talking with a man from the south of France. The Frenchman starts his biography with riding his bicycle from New York to Vancouver. From there, he took a plane to L.A. and continued biking down the coast of Mexico. He shared a story about being in Buffalo, New York during July 4th.

He spent this holiday afternoon it near Lake Erie. He found a small beach with a buoyed off area designated for swimming. After deciding to take a dip, he quickly ventured outside the

buoys. The lifeguard on duty began to blow his whistle and was yelling that he couldn't swim there. The Frenchman responded by yelling back in a thick accent, "Look!! I can swim. See!!" After seeing the lifeguard wasn't open to debate, the Frenchman went back within the buoys.

Back on shore, a girl took her top off while surrounded by a group of cheering men. The lifeguard and several elderly women intervened and demanded the girl cover up.

Later that day, the traveler rode his bike back into town. Somewhere along his path, he was chased by a man on his cell phone yelling, "This is a private street! You can't ride your bike here!!"

The traveler concluded his story with, "And *that* is what I remember about Lie-ber-tee day in 'The Land of the Free.'"

The boy stayed at the bar for a few more hours and then headed home. Back at the ranch, he noticed that a light was left on in the spare bedroom. He went in to shut it off and was startled to see the naked bar owner laying there...alone. The boy went to bed knowing he would get the rest of the story the next morning.

As it goes, the bar owner came by shortly after Annie and the guru got home. Again, he tried to get Annie to go back to his place. Then he offered to go into his van and suggested one more time that they go back to his place. He also offered to take her away for a weekend--apparently too drunk to realize that she isn't going to leave her young baby behind.

With each offer, Annie responded with, "Come inside and fuck...or go home." After an hour of debate, he finally came in for sex. Afterwards, Annie retired to sleep next to the guru. The owner, alone in the spare bedroom, began throwing a bit of a

tantrum. He was swearing and there was a loud crash. This prompted the guru to get up and confront the owner. The guru explained that Annie would not be returning this evening. The owner was free to stay or go home...but, if he stayed, he was to show some respect.

Two people want sex. One says: "Fuck now or go home." Why aren't we free to see things are this simple?

Lie-ber-tee.

93

The boy has had a few successive days of not wanting to write. So he didn't. He doesn't immediately recall anything that happened during that time. And he's not very interested in attempting a recall. If something isn't fresh, he doesn't feel it is worth expressing. It just ends up feeling like a story about what someone was wearing last Tuesday.

Fresh on his mind is the topic: what others are interested in.

Picture a small Mexican town. Three Caucasians in love (and a baby) often mill about the more public areas. Within the group, is a 70-year-old man in proper guru attire. Specifically, he displays full-length white robes from India, a white shawl folded over his shoulder, a bamboo cane, a recently purchased white cowboy hat, and a small collection of oddly original jewelry. Sometimes, the guru can be seen holding a 3-month-old, glowing baby that he is not shy to label as his own. "Grandpa shoots straight!" he exclaims. Other times, he may be seen prancing around hand-in-hand with a braless, 33-year-old girl. She often wears a loose skirt short enough to allow her panties to show...even without catching a breeze...and sometimes she isn't wearing panties. The boy accompanies this show mainly in paisley shirts, a crushed blue velvet jacket, a fedora with a feather, and an unobvious relationship to the others.

Now, this little group is definitely open to chatting. And they are meeting new people every day. They are a rich resource for sexy, running-from-the-military, astral-projecting, shape-

shifting, cancer-healing, illogical experiences from all over the world. Who wouldn't be interested in their stories?

So far, the common response to the group after any introduction has been: "Umm...how long you in town for?"

Annie recalls returning back to Minnesota after living in both Tibet and India for over two years. Her older sister had also recently returned from a trip. She was vacationing for a week at the family condo in Florida. So, the sister's family decided to celebrate the two homecomings with a dinner. Grandma had made the dinner reservations for the occasion at an Indian restaurant. Annie, somehow not understandably, was hoping for something other than Indian cuisine.

At the dinner, the entire conversation centered around the older sister's trip to Florida condo. "How was the weather?"..."Is there anything wrong with the condo?"..."Did you see any new birds at the feeder?"...

There was only one comment to Annie about India...and it wasn't even a question, really: "It gets really hot over there, doesn't it?"

...

When you happen to meet someone "interested" in you, often this results in a mad scramble for facts. Especially when a person has little shared history around you, they can be almost desperate to piece together "who you are." Commonly requested information includes: name, age, place of residence, interests, occupation, familial status, religious viewpoints, personal philosophy, sexual history, etc.

If a person needs to build an image of "your character" in their head in order to interact with "you," you might question which entity they then go on to interact with.

Today, the boy got the same question he has gotten numerous times: "What do you do for a living?"

He has answered this question many times in the past with bitterness. This was partially because he didn't enjoy what he was doing for a living. This frequent reminder, of what he already spent too much time thinking about, only added to his troubles. Another frustration with the inquiry was its predictability. It was as common as someone picking up a telephone with "hello."

But, lately, he has been more appreciative towards life...Today he answered, "I'm a con-artist."

He got a startled response: "What?"

"I'm a con-artist."

"Heh, ok...Robbed any banks lately?"

"No, I stopped doing that a few years back. Bank robbery has gotten so technical lately. What used to be an art has just turned into an ordinary science...or worse, a bland job in the check cashing business."

"So what kind of 'cons' do you do now?"

"Right now my 'con' is to convince you that I'm a con-artist."

The individual gave the boy a suspicious look, shook his head attempting to clear the confusion, and soon walked away.

The boy parted with a chuckle. The question isn't so bad when you like what you do for a living.

Children's Story #5

When I was a young girl, my family always used my middle name to address me. I don't know why exactly...that was just how it was. Even when I was in preschool, my teacher and the other kids called me by my middle name.

Then, on my first day of kindergarten, the teacher asked me my name...and I told her. She was confused for a moment, as she looked at the piece of paper she was holding. During the awkward pause, I thought maybe I wasn't supposed to be there. Then her eyes returned to me and she said that "we only use first names in this class."

I remember trying to explain a bit, but she was adamant. I quickly gave up and just took on this strange name.

Every day in kindergarten, I was one person...and then, at home, I was another.

Later, when I entered the first grade, some of the kids I went to preschool with were in my class. Alongside those kids, there were a few from my old kindergarten class. I can clearly see the day that I watched them in a heated argument over who I was.

Throughout the debate, nobody consulted me...and I didn't say a word. I was still a bit confused about the whole thing myself.

Looking back, I find it a bit unnerving how sure those kids were that they knew.

95.5

The boy went down to the beach surf camp in the afternoon. While there, he introduced himself to the majority of 20 and 30-year-old travelers. To each one he inquired about how they spent their time in San Blas. Here is what he had to report:

Sometimes they sat in the sun. Sometimes they sat in the shade. Some of them worked at the beach restaurant...but business was slow...so most of their work was just sitting around. At night, they sat and drank beer. And sometimes they played cards.

At the end of each conversation, the boy asked: "So, are you the one that is planning the bonfire tonight?"

Each one essentially replied, "Nooo, not me...there's a bonfire tonight?"

The boy, to each: "There is...if you are the one planning the bonfire tonight."

Some of these people chuckled. Some just walked away shaking their head. None of them said, "OK, let's do it."

So, the boy committed to being the one to set up the event. He made the rounds one more time to inform everyone there would be a beach bonfire the next evening.

96

The Night of the Big Bonfire:

The boy found someone who promised to deliver firewood to the beach. He headed down to the beach camp at about 7:30 p.m. to set things up. When he arrived, it was already dark on an uncommonly cold evening. Perfect for a fire...he thought.

At the camp, he found everyone sitting around a restaurant table. They were drinking beer and playing cards. He stood silently alongside the table for a moment and watched them. Not one of them acknowledged his presence so he finally piped up: "Did anyone drop off some firewood?"

One of them pointed towards the ocean, "Over there."

He looked out at a pitch-black ocean background and said sarcastically, "Nobody started the fire up?"

The first to respond said, "It's your fire."

Ok, Ok. The boy apparently is seen as imposing. That's fine. He decided to let the fire do the work...he went out to the beach, found the stack of firewood, and attempted to start everyone's fire.

The first tee-pee structure was a bit too unstable. And there was not enough palm ferns to get the fire going well...so the boy rebuilt it. He sunk a few of the big logs into the sand upright. Then he leaned other logs at a slant, using the sunken ones to prop one end up. He added a healthy dose of palm ferns underneath, and the fire was off and running.

The boy sat down in a plastic restaurant chair and smoked a cigarette after his effort. He took a couple swigs of wine and

followed that with a second cigarette. After enjoying the warmth for about a half hour, he headed back to the woodpile to add more fuel. When he was walking to get the wood, he noticed that the dozen or so people at the restaurant were no longer there. He thought, "Just like cockroaches, they scamper when the light turns on."

Maybe it was actually going to wind up being *his* fire. He had anticipated a relatively small showing by the beach campers...but never zero. All was not lost, of course. The fire would continue to get more attractive as the night went on. Plus, he was rather enjoying this time alone. Some more wine, another cigarette, the warm crackling of burning wood...the boy settled into his private event.

Another half-hour passed before one person approached from behind. The boy felt a tap on his shoulder and turned to encounter a man saying hello. The boy introduced himself, but the man did not return the formality. Instead, the man somewhat scoldingly cautioned the boy not to build the fire any higher. He was concerned that the wind might change and some embers could waft over to the restaurants. The boy giggled a little at his assumption that this visitor had come to join him. His laughter unnerved the already stressed man even further. The boy reset his demeanor and gave calm eyed assurances that he would remain vigilant. Half satisfied, the man stomped off as quickly as one can in fluffy sand and flip-flops. The boy returned to watching the fire and feeling the impeding material between his toes.

Another half hour of tending to the fire had gone by when the boy got a second visitor. This time the visitor was a girl. After seeing nothing but red embers and yellow flames for a

while, her appearance makes an impact. She stands with a sly grin in large black combat boots, patchwork slacks, an old wool military jacket, and a mohawk. Her style could be a cross between a Berlin punk kid, train-hopping hobo, and a clown. She has a confidence hinting that she may be as old as thirty, but her face indicates she is much younger. After waiting for the boy to take the next step, she takes up the boy's offer of wine and pulls up a chair close to him.

Here is how this one plays out: The two bounce questions back and forth about their past. They also discuss how they don't much like talking about their past. This switches the conversation more towards personal philosophy. They share more wine and smoke as they settle into what will likely be a long talk.

The boy explains his past is largely irrelevant. He feels to be a completely different person than he was even a month ago. When he talks about his past, it is as if he is describing someone else. The girl concurs on this point. She had shared relatively little about her situation before Mexico. For whatever reason, life back home wasn't good. She left Utah in short notice and hitchhiked to San Blas. The only other bit of information she revealed was that she left behind someone she is in love with...and the boy reminds her of that loved one.

The conversation next settles upon interests. The boy loves to learn about people, so much of this conversation is run by the girl. Although she shares his interest in others, she feels frustrated by the difficulty in ever *really* knowing anyone. She spends much of her attention expressing herself through art because she feels words are even more inadequate. But she does admit that sometimes words can be quite penetrating.

The girl excuses herself to grab a book she is fond of. It is by Fernando Pessoa and is earmarked to a particular page. A summary of the passage could read: "Why even try and understand anyone when you are, by nature, subjective. As such, you can never be fully understood. And no one will ever actually understand you."

[Well, now we are in the middle of it. Two people that have done too much thinking about thinking are comparing notes.]

The boy claims he doesn't ever know the content of someone else's head exactly the way they do. Every other person carries around a collection of subjective thoughts...a personal dreamland. However, he feels that when one stops thinking about what is actually going on, it possible to continue observing. This observation does not focus on individual details. It views a situation as a whole. And when the boy looks at things from this perspective, although everyone still seems to be reacting their own way, they all are seen to react to and within the same situation.

The situation appears to him to be shared waves of energies. He feels that trying to know the various subjective interpretations of the present energies doesn't really add much understanding. It is irrelevant because, when he observes without thought, he understands everyone completely in terms of these energies. There is no need for him to try and "understand" anything because all is the same as that which he can clearly see.

The boy uses the topic of art in an attempt to illustrate: To him, a real artist is one that can pick up on these common energies. What we often call "art" is just the particular form...a byproduct. It is what presently experienced energies

inspire a person to create. A wise artist has realized this process and focuses on expressing the energies rather than any personal interpretation of them. When someone else, open to the experience, takes a good look upon that work of art; the underlying energy is what affects the observer. Only later can an observer have their own subjective reaction or interpretation.

Wise artists accept that each person will react differently to the same piece of art. And each reaction is equally valid. They will usually avoid answering questions about what a particular work of art "means." If they do answer, it will likely be an effort to create space for interpretations. The artist knows that a closed answer usually only serves to mislead others from the art's true beauty.

These underlying energies are amazing because they don't require a specific individual. They do not perish with a particular person. In a sense, they are immortal. And the boy strongly feels they can continue without humankind. They could be described as fundamental energies of the universe itself...spanning from the beginning to the end of time. Express one of these, and you speak for the eternal...

[one question you might ask: Is possible to ever *not* to express these energies.]

The girl had been listening intently for most of this ramble, but the boy could tell her attention was fixed on something.

"Let's regain our focus...Take us, right here, for another example."

"Ok."

"Here we are...two people on a beach. I built a fire, you introduced yourself and sat down, and now we are talking. Right?"

"Pretty much."

"And you feel like we can never really know each other."

"Definitely."

"But let's change the perspective a little. Two people on the beach feel an underlying attraction to create union. Therefore, one attempts to build an attractive fire. The other sees an opportunity for an easy introduction and takes it. Yet still this desire for 'union' coincides with frustration over being 'separate.' The two talk and talk in a hunt for common interests and ideas. They share wine and cigarettes. All of these events are still reactions to wanting a union. They could have chosen to do any number of things. What they end up doing isn't really relevant. Nobody needs to know the details if they know the underlying energy. I know every detail I need. You want union. And I understand you completely because it is the same energy I feel."

The girl sat for a while and took it all in. The boy had no idea what she was doing with it.

He felt the energy of union fading and attempted to get her moving along, again: "I'm more concerned about *it* than thoughts *about it*."

[I paraphrased the boy's drunken rant a bit for the reader. Yet, in it's modified form, it was still exhausting to write. But exhaustion can be a useful tool for getting what you want from someone else. Especially when you are only exhausting his or her resistance to doing what they want.]

The girl ended the rant first: "Enough of the guru talk." [not paraphrased or modified]

She politely excused herself to get something to eat. By the time she returned, the fire had nearly died out. The boy quickly turned to her and said, "So, would you like to know what is in my subjective world right now?"

"Sure."

"The way I see it, I'm wavering between two options."

"Ok."

"Either I go home alone...or we can have sex together...Personally, I'm hoping for the second option."

She responded with a sly grin, "Was that a come on?"

"You picked up on that! Maybe we can actually understand each other!"

The two laughed for a bit and then fell silent. The girl wore an expression that the boy interpreted (subjectively) as debate. He decided to press a little further.

"I know I'm being blunt, here. But, we can view this as a simple choice, really...And underneath all that armor (her costume), I think there is a beautiful young woman that wants to be touched."

She responded with a shy grin and fell silent, again. The boy didn't know the details of why this decision was difficult. And he didn't really care. He sensed an increasing fear that told him not to press further. He went back to poking at the dying fire while she thought to herself.

After a moment, she raised her head to face the boy, "Do you have hot water at your place?"

"Yep."

"That seals the deal." And the girl stood up. "I'll meet you out in front of the camp in a few minutes...This place is like a soap opera. I'll sit down with the others, say goodnight, and slip out."

The boy put out the fire and went out to the street in front of the camp. On his second cigarette, the girl came walking out alone.

The boy asked coyly, "Do you think they bought it?"

"I'm not worried if they saw. There is a difference between sneaking out and leaving discreetly."

The boy wondered what exactly the difference was...but he filed that task away as the two got in the car. The philosophical chit chat had done its job. He finally let his mind rest, focusing instead on the lovely energies they were creating. As they drove away, he turned to her and said, "Do I need to tell you I am very happy right now?"

The girl responded flatly, "No."

The rest of the ride was spent in vibrating silence.

97

When people meet for the first time, I think it takes only a few seconds (at maximum) for them to know they want to get closer. But seconds later, usually neither has done a thing about it.

[Insert any reason why people refrain from immediately acting upon a mutual desire for union.]

[Explore each reason and determine it's source. Question which is a better guide towards love: those sources or the mutual attraction.]

100

They boy and his new love arrived at his apartment. She went to take a warm shower while the boy prepped his bedroom. When she reentered, she was running her hand through her damp hair. She commented about how it was slightly uncomfortable to feel clean, again. After a beer and some music, she turned to the boy and commanded, "Strip."

The boy took his clothes off slowly while she watched. He climbed on the bed towards her. As he reached for her belt, she stopped him. She said with a sly grin, "With your teeth."

A debriefing session on unfastening the common belt using only your teeth:

In theory, unfastening a belt with your teeth is very simple. In the field, however, this task is surrounded by situational elements that can cause difficulties. For example, one may need to perform this maneuver while under the influence of various motor and mental skill inhibitors. Additionally, the field operative may be confronted with low visibility and high anxiety. However, successful performance of this maneuver can result in a large payoff to the operative who maintains a clear focus upon the task before them...now let's get started:

First, free the excess belt strap out from under any belt loops. It may take a few tries to get the strap moving, depending on how tight the pants are. Once there is enough slack to get a good hold, the excess belt should be easily freed.

The next stage is getting the clasp's prong out of the belt hole. A strong tug of the excess belt strap in the direction away from the belt buckle should do it. A pleasing popping sound usually indicates success.

The last stage is getting the belt completely out of the buckle. First, ensure the prong is angled away from the belt as far as possible. This is to prevent the prong inadvertently catching in a hole on the belt strap. One may also have to tug on the buckle itself to create adequate slack. In this instance, use caution. Many buckles are metal--not only hard to grip but also tough on the teeth. One suggestion is to suck and swallow excess mouth cavity moisture to aid friction. As a general rule, operatives are advised against excessive rotation of the belt buckle itself. Positioning the belt buckle past vertical increases the likelihood that the prong will catch on a belt hole. Lastly, pull on the belt strap carefully from the underside of the buckle. If the buckle and prong positions are disturbed, one may have to go back and readjust them. Again, removing the length of the belt will likely take more than one try.

As always, the points described here are merely suggestive, folks. Every situation is different so you must think quick on your feet, knees...or whatever. Good luck out there. You are dismissed.

The boy got the belt off, having only minor difficulty. A single strong tug on the pants got them unfastened, too. He turned his attention towards the tiny zipper when...

"Wait, wait," she said.

The boy looked up at her with his chin resting on her crotch. The faint odor was delicious to him. She responded by quickly taking her pants and shirt off herself.

The boy was correct in his assumptions. She is amazing without her costume. She has smallish feet (freshly washed)...her pinky toes are barely big enough to fit a toenail. Add to those, a pair of shapely firm legs with fine, soft growth...almost imperceptible above the knees. The intricacies of the crotch area are still masked by a pair of underpants, but it is framed by two curvy hips. Above that is a small waist, soft yet flat stomach, and a deep belly button the tip of a finger would need slight pressure to fit in. Add two perky breasts with circular-shaped, small areole and hard nipples. Her slightly broad shoulders and toned arms rest below a long neck surrounded by a black, silk choke collar. She has a triangular shaped face, small but puffy lips, eyes of an indiscernible color in the dark, very subtle freckles beneath lightly tanned skin...and one soggy mohawk. There you have it. A 5'1" and 100-pound, sexy girl on the run...minus a few important details.

She wriggled out from underneath the boy to search for something in her military jacket lying on the floor. Meanwhile, the boy was reaching towards the other side of the bed for a condom and some lubrication. They chuckled as they both turned towards each other to find each others hands full of the same items.

They kissed a few times before she turned her head sideways. Then they sucked on each other's necks and shoulders. Soon the boy was down to her nipples, stomach, and other parts previously unexplored. Her back arched as she squeezed his head between

her thighs. She flipped the boy over on his back and licked his penis twice. He was hard instantly. She put the condom on him and applied some lubrication. Then she climbed on top of him and slowly lowered herself until he had penetrated her completely. She ground her clit into his pelvic bone from that position. Then she backed off a little and rubbed her clit with her fingers with the boy still insides her. Her head and shoulders tilted back pushing her chest out. The boy watched her facial expressions as she came close to orgasm. A gentle gyration of the boy's hips and things were off and running.

They fucked for about an hour in various positions until they took a break. After a cigarette, they lied down in each other's arms and drifted off to sleep together.

After about two hours, the boy awoke to find the girl scratching some bug bites. He went down on her again until she came, and they quickly fell back asleep.

An hour later, they were both awake, again. They fucked harder and faster this time. As the boy was about to cum, he tried to kiss her. She allowed one peck on the lips but yanked her head sideways to avoid more.

This time, she rolled away quickly after sex. There was no cuddling and no kissing. Again, the boy sensed anxiety. He lied awake feeling the contrast of the previous moments and this isolation of torturous self-thought.

104

The guru often notes that we currently live in an age of mediocrity. To both Annie and the boy, this statement is easy to agree with. Yet, the guru's understanding is likely a bit different from the other two. He has been on this crazy planet for 70 years. A handful of "ages" have come and go during his time. And with his extensive travels, he has seen many different aspects of various stages. To people raised almost entirely within the current mediocrity, it is hard to picture anything different. It is difficult to have the perspective that these mediocre times must pass.

The guru uses the analogy of a person starting a new diet and exercise routine. He explains the common pattern: A person starts a new routine to alter their body. If dutifully carried out, soon there is a period of rapid change. But eventually, the body reaches a plateau. At this point, people may react in various ways. Some change their routine--either to make it more intensive, or they switch to a differently one. Other people may get discouraged and relapse into an old routine. And others continue on. Any of these group may find that they eventually pass the plateau and are again in a stage of "progress."

The analogy is flawed and incomplete, to be sure. The point is that nature is always changing...even when it seems it is not. Life and evolution are the same. Evolution includes both the jumps and the plateaus. Evolution has the qualities of seeming both patient and opportunistic.

The boy is reminded of the other travelers staying at the beach in San Blas. Each of them lit up when the boy mentioned

he donated a Karaouc novel to the camp. Each traveler must have been already familiar with the author and the "beat generation." And there are some parallels between the beat generation and the travelers in Mexico. Everyone at the beach has experimented with drugs. All of them are making frequent travels. None of them hold a "regular" job.

What may seem like experiments in freedom, the boy sees as mediocre copies.

Where is the jump in traveling a well-worn path to quickly settle with others doing the same? Where is the adventure in exploring according to a travel guide? Can't you sit around, drink beer, play cards, and complain about the world anywhere? Then why are these people traveling? The boy was repeating his impressions of when he first read "On the Road" and not accepting the nature of the plateau.

Annie tells a story about a Tibetan Lama she encountered on her travels. The lama was going to throw away the Buddhist hierarchy to find truth for herself. Seeing Annie in a similar position, the Lama's advice to her was, "Be careful not to sleep with anyone that has a high level of awareness. They can easily take advantage of you."

Annie wondered, how anyone was expected to evolve if they refuse to relate to a higher stage. And besides, how is one to be able to recognize someone at a higher state? Isn't that necessarily going to be beyond the person's capacity? How can a person evolve without the risk of venturing into something unknown? Why is everyone so afraid to place trust their own intuition? Why do those who claim they value freedom tend to provide their personal box of limitations for others to reside in?

Maybe it is time to accept a plateau...or maybe we should push on...

106

Valentine's Day #1:

The next morning the group goes out to check email. There are three electronic greeting cards on the guru's inbox. It strikes the group as a bit queer that they all arrived on the same day...until it dawns on Annie...oh yes, it is Valentine's Day. Instantly Annie and the guru turn to each other and share a couple of loving kisses. Then, as quickly as it began, they are back to email.

[I wish I could convey the humor of this situation...but I know most of it will be lost. To the boy, the pantomime was so perfectly acted out: People displaying affection because the calendar said so...then quickly going back to whatever they normally do. It was also humorous because what Annie and the guru's display was quite minor compared to what may be observed any day of their years.]

Aside from a silly pantomime, what is this day about? Perhaps it is a reminder to allow love to draw us in. But, this would also mean that we need the reminder. Why would we ever let ourselves forget to value love? And, knowing we tend to forget, why would only set our alarm for once a year?

Even though we set the reminder, Valentine's Day seems to be forgotten. The business world clearly has quite an interest in turning the day into an impetus to consumer spending. To others, the day is merely a contractual term between "loved" ones. I wonder how many relationship agreements have been

terminated for failure to perform a valentine's day obligation satisfactorily.

What will this Valentine's Day mean? Will draw us to love? Or will it put our so called love through a test of validity? Hmm. We'll have to wait and see what else happens...

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Valentine's Day #2:

The boy went down to the beach in the afternoon. He realized he left a shawl there during "The Night of the Big Bonfire." And, of course, he hoped to bump into his new love. He approached a table of beach campers sitting around playing cards (the object of his affection not being among them). One camper was in the middle of a story. She wore a Bob Marley tee-shirt filled with flowers and other various love symbolism. He stood quietly waiting for her to take a breath.

He did not really hear the content of the story. What he paid attention to was the orator's eyes. They were bulging with anger. Words were flying out--they reminded him of machine gun fire coming from an over volumed war movie playing in an adjacent room. He sat pondering whether he should yell out "Happy Valentine's Day!!" at the top of his lungs to interrupt.

After a few minutes, she suddenly froze. She looked up at the boy and blurted, "Hello?"

"Hello" is a strange word in modern usage. One might analyze it this way: Most people say, "Hello." Others say, "Hello?" But very few just say, "Hello." The first variety wants something from *you* and it serves as a place to start. The second variety assume you want something from *them* and serves as a place to start. The third just acknowledges your presence.

You can tell a lot about people from their favorite type of "hello."

This particular "hello" was of the second variety...and it the speaker had judged the boy correctly. He responded with part of what he wanted: "Has anyone seen my shawl? I left it out by the bonfire last night."

Nobody had seen the shawl. Perhaps the wind blew it away, or it was snatched up early this morning by a passerby as unattended property. The boy gave his thanks and walked closer to the ocean to sit and read a book. In the background he heard the war film resume.

After a few minuets, the other thing he wanted approached him from behind and said, "Hello." It was a hello of the first kind.

She explained that she had bought a bottle of rum and was embarking on a three day "bender." Her decision was based on the fact that she got some emails from friends back home about drunken shenanigans. [typing that word makes me wonder about its origin...anyway...] After the short story, she walked off to retell it to another individual. Then she sat down to play cards with the other campers. She showed relatively little interest in drawing closer to love with the boy. Or perhaps, she was putting this love through the test of inattention.

The boy began his exit from the beach camp without reading more than a page in his book. He gave a "goodbye", of the third variety, to the card players and made a point to give the girl a separate one in the first.

Her response was of an indeterminate type.

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Valentine's Day #3:

The boy returns back to the house to find the guru and Annie chatting. They are admiring the baby, lying with them on the bed, awake and kicking in smiles. They all talk for an hour before the guru asks the boy, "What do you think the people on the beach are up to?"

"I imagine they are nibbling on some food and drinking beer. Maybe playing some cards. I think that girl (he still doesn't know her name) is probably at blackout stage by now. She is either passed out or wandering around town in a haze."

A few minutes later a figure walks past the bedroom door. It is the girl. She explains the family living downstairs let her in as she pulls up a chair and begins talking...very slowly. She apologizes about her drunken state a few times and is again concerned about walking in without an invitation. Everyone responds that they are happy she came over.

She pauses for a bit and then asks, "How did I get in?"

The guru responds slowly, "You were let in."

She poses a few questions to the guru. The first was about where he has lived in the past. He spent the last 30 or so years in India. "I lived primarily in Midras in the south and Dehli in the north. I traveled back and forth because of my students...I am a spiritual teacher."

"Do you have...any sort of, of, um...position?"

"No, we exist outside of every organization."

"I heard...a rumor...that, um...in...Tibet...they take bodies...of monks...and put them outside, um...for the birds...to eat them...the dead bodies...up in the hills...is that true?"

"Yes, there is at least one group I know of that still does that. In fact, sometimes they don't even carry the body away from town. They just put it on the roof. Nobody disturbs the birds as they take the body away, piece-by-piece...It is a very sacred moment"

"So, you lived in India? What parts?"

"Well, hehe...ok, I lived in Madras in the south; Dehli in the north...Did you know it is true that, in Tibet, they place the bodies of dead monks out for the birds to eat?"

"Yes," Ashnar said with conviction.

"How do you know it is true? I suspect that someone just told you that."

Ashnar paused. "How did I get in?"

"You were let in."

She excused herself abruptly and went to the bathroom.

Annie said she wasn't sure she could take any more of this. The boy grabbed his jacket and met the girl as she was exiting the bathroom. The two agreed to go for a walk around town.

It was a good walk. She did a few cartwheels, they held hands as they ran to the docks, sat under the stars, and skipped together on the way back. The girl recited some poetry she wrote. There were no longer any pauses or "umms" in her speech.

San Blas is a pleasure to wander through at night. There are good alleyways off of the main cobblestone roads. These alleys are footpaths only--too narrow for cars. They wind amongst the backyards of dense houses with open doors. Small pockets of children playing can be seen now and then...cats and

dogs are milling about...people are sitting around chatting...Every "hola" or "buenos noches" is of the third variety.

The two wanderers arrive back to the front door of the boy's apartment. She follows him in without needing an invitation. Quickly they retire to the boy's bedroom, and foreplay lasts for about an hour.

The sex is much different this time...sweeter...closer...deeper. Sex quickly reaches a point where neither has any reservations left. It proceeds smoothly like a well orchestrated dance. Several climaxes happen but these are no more notable than any other moment. After the boy's last orgasm, he sinks into a sweet death--his body is rejuvenated quickly by his absence. Neither of them move for at least 15 minuets.

Some more water, a few cigarettes, and a couple of songs later; they are back to kissing each others' bodies. The boy goes down on her. She climaxes again while the boy's arms are firmly gripping the tops of her thighs and slamming her clitoris towards his flattened tongue. He ends by giving her clitoris a big smooch with plenty of vibration. She squirms uncontrollably and slaps him playfully on the shoulder. They giggle together and lay to rest, again.

She is very cuddly now. The only words spoken during the next 15 minutes are by her: She mutters three times, "God damn."

Later they get some more water, take turns picking songs off the boy's computer, and smoke together. She inquires while holding hands, "Who are you?"

"I guess I can't really answer that. To me, I am really not real."

A pause.

"So, who are you?"

"That question is tough. To me, I feel like I can only describe what I am not. I'm not what you think. I'm not what I think. I'm not this human body. I'm not that...etcetera."

A pause.

"So, who are you?"

A pause.

"I feel more like a space. Like this space here...that the material world exists in. It is where emotions come and go. Where things pop up, change, interact, and disappear."

A long pause.

"So, who are you?"

"Hmm, ok...I feel more like a canvas than the painting. You can make multiple paintings on a canvas. And any painting can cause any number of reactions. But the same canvas is always there."

"But, aren't you also the painting?"

"Oh, yes. I think so. It is just that the painting comes and goes. It pops up for a time, does its thing, and I'm back to blank canvas. The painting is created, ages, changes, interacts, and dies. That is why I feel the canvas is more like the real me. It is a constant."

"I like that." She pauses, and then asks, "So, who are you?"

"That one wasn't good enough?"

"It is never good enough."

"Ok, I feel like I'm a black hole in which all things come from and all things return to. Every time you ask me a question, I am also the answer that I give for that moment."

After the answer has done its thing, that expression of "me" dies. The vast majority of "me" remains unborn. I feel like a deep well of potential "me."

The boy continues, "Take for instance: tonight. During sex, I felt very deeply that I was nothing but a well of energy. Within that energy was our bodies, this room, etc."

The girl interrupts, "That is funny that you say claim you are a "black hole" because it is something that nobody can experience."

"I suppose I would have to disagree. To me, I feel like I experience the black hole all the time. Sometimes it lies in the background and sometimes I dive right into it. My body doesn't physically go in...even so, I experience it *through* my body. Up to this point, every time I've dove in, it spits me out again. Coming out of the black hole feels like...a white hole. You feel like everything was just created from scratch.

I believe when this body dies, I will go back into that black hole. I don't know whether I will get spit out again...in some completely different form...If I had my choice, I would probably stay in there. After I've been in it, it always seems so silly that I come back out. Out here, it feels very limiting...but then again, these limitations have their beauty, too. For instance, if I had stayed in that black hole, I wouldn't be able to be here...in San Blas...with you."

Miraculously, the two somehow manage not to get caught up in how cheesy the boy's last line was. Instead they hug each other and kiss...

Happy Valentine's Day everyone.

112

So, I'm reminded again of just how cynical towards life The Book is. It is filled with bitterness and anger on nearly every page. The most recent reminder came while looking back upon a the boy's lovely ending to his Valentine's Day. Yet with how perfect everything felt to him as he dozed off, The Book pages on this day can still be seen as quite critical.

I'm toying with the excuse that "true" joy cannot be put into words. But, I must relay, it has been very joyful for the boy to write about his sex with his new love. Maybe it is possible for The Reader to have a different appreciation from that "you had to be there" vibe? Can we discover together the same joy constantly available in any activity? Or, maybe that is a different book...

So, I will make a pact with the reader. I'm going to be on the lookout for ways to express joy in the days to come. Hopefully, these methods include writing. As a contrast, I trust cynical expressions will remain peppered throughout.

Much love,
The Book

Oh...here's a movie idea...let's see how we do...

(relative speed of film vs. real time in parentheses, 1X = real time)

(50X)--Split screen of a thirty-something couple going to their separate jobs. Go through the entire day until they meet each other at home for dinner.

(1X)--Professionally dressed woman enters front door, takes coat off, drapes it over the back of a nearby chair. She heads upstairs to the bedroom and begins to change into more comfortable clothes. Freshly showered man comes out of the attached bathroom and kisses woman on the cheek.

(10X)--Eat dinner & fuck

(0.5X)--During orgasm: zoom to sperm bursting through a condom, follow it until it finds an egg.

(5,000X)--Two months of everyday life fly past for the couple.

(0.5X)--Zoom in on woman looking at a pregnancy test that reads positive.

(25,000X)--Seven months of work, heated discussions between the lovers, other everyday things...with eloping to wed somewhere in the middle of all that.

(1X)--Close up on woman's face in the hospital, she is screaming while giving birth.

(500,000X)--Various events over the next 15 years...for example, one of the parents loose a job, the family moves to the country, and the kid grows up.

(5X)--Kid standing on a ladder during a hot summer day and painting the outside of a barn. Mom coming out with fresh lemonade on a tray.

(0.01X)--Close up of kids mouth while he or she takes a big gulp from a glass dripping with perspiration. Afterward, the kid displays an exaggerated expression of satisfaction.

(1,000,000X)--Child grows up, then old, and dies after a full life of events.

Children's Story #6

My family and I are visiting my uncle in Denver, Colorado. My uncle resides in one of those high-rise apartment complexes...you know...thirty stories high and right in the middle of downtown. To me, I can't wait to get there because somewhere in that thing is a swimming pool. Before we left for Denver, my uncle told me over the phone, "Make sure to pack your swimming trunks."

Believe me. I made sure.

We drive into Denver sometime during the afternoon and head straight to my uncle's apartment complex. My family and I park the car, get the luggage out, and carry it up to the building entrance. We push the intercom button for my uncle's unit and are buzzed right in. After finding the elevator, we pile into it and head up. My uncle is there, smiling to greet us, as the elevator doors open. The first words he says are directed towards me, "You remembered your swimsuit, didn't you?"

I respond with a confident "sure did" and he leads us down the long hallway towards his unit. After we get into the apartment, my uncle shows us where to set our luggage down. At this point, I start to lose my composure. While my parents and uncle exchange hugs and pleasantries I blurt, "When can go swimming?"

My father responds with a sigh, "Can we rest for a little bit? It was a long ride."

"How about after dinner." My mother commands in the form of a question. [later in life, I realize she is not the only one that routinely does this]

My uncle sees my disappointment and offers a compromise, "I can take him to see the pool while you two unpack."

My parents agree, and my uncle and I leave them in the apartment. The pool is back down the hallway and up the elevator a few floors, my uncle informs me. We ride the elevator up, and as the doors open, the smell of chlorine hits. The air is considerably warm and humid compared to the rest of the complex. There is a rather large pool straight ahead in my line of view with two rows of tinted windows evenly spaced on each side. The Denver skyline peeks through along with the afternoon sun touching down on one edge of the pool. The water is so calm it barely reflects any shimmer back to my eyes.

I walk quickly, straight to the front edge of the pool. I reach down to test it with my hand. It is warmer than expected. Ripples spread slowly away from me. Over my shoulder I hear my uncle's voice, "Once we get in, I'll make sure your parents let you swim as long as you want."

Dinner at some restaurant comes and goes, as most of my thoughts still involve the swimming pool. After dinner, I wait anxiously as keys jangle to let me back into the apartment. As soon as the doorknob is turned, I squirm ahead of everyone. I run to the spare bedroom and dig into my bag. My swim trunks are pulled out of a specially reserved compartment and changed into quickly.

The next "forever" I spend waiting for the adults to get ready. They all move so slowly. As my father sits down in a chair, he makes his usual after-dinner-beach-whale groans. I jump around and act silly in an attempt to animate them. They laugh at me briefly, which leads me to think I may have succeeded. But the spark quickly fades, and they blandly tell

me to "hold on." The scene returns to slow motion. There is a pause between frames that contains conversation about something I'm certain is not important. It is the same conversation that didn't concern me on the way to dinner, all through dinner, and on the way back.

My uncle breaks the frozen scene by appearing at the bedroom door--ready and smiling. I head out with him...leaving my parents behind. My uncle states as we exit, "Were going to go ahead. The pool is on the eighth floor."

I bounce around in the elevator anticipating the warm pool opening to me. Right when the doors part, I begin to run. My uncle runs along side me...giving a sinister laugh of excitement. I'm halfway to the pool when he grabs the back of my swim trunks to halt me. Suddenly, I am up in the air giving off a startled squeal.

He carries me a few steps towards the pool and hurls me into the air. I flail as I soar...not knowing which way is up. The water crashes into me with a deafening sound. Still disoriented, I find myself underwater until I get my bearings and come up for air.

"Again!" I yell to my laughing uncle.

I rush out of the pool only to have him throw me back in. Over and over, we play fetch with me until...THUD.

I wake up to a horrible headache. I am being carried in my mother's arms. She is in a hurry...every hasty step makes my head throb. This is no longer the pool area. There are people everywhere. Bright lights bounce past my eyes...I catch snippets of voices from all directions.

It takes me some time to realize that this must be a hospital. I begin to cry into my mother's shoulder...

I am placed on my back. My mother continues to hold something uncomfortably against my chin until a different woman intervenes. I begin to scream as my mother is pushed aside revealing a blinding light behind her head. I close my eyes and it brings even more of my attention to my throbbing head. My screams hurt my own ears.

Two others now hold my ankles and my elbows down. I struggle...wanting out of the imposed situation. Their grip tightens as I try to fight. My writhing only pinches my own skin under the restraints. I continue to scream. My mother's terrified voice is faint in the distance as she meekly tries to assert herself.

A new pair of hands grab my head. I attempt to twist free again, but it is no use. The whole situation is becoming unbearable now. I shut down...too overwhelmed to fight. I drift off...

A stinging prick in my chin brings me back to the hospital scene. I attempt to scream but a hand holds my mouth shut. Next, there is a pinching sensation on my chin. It hurts worse and lingers longer than the previous prick. This pain escalates...it feels like the skin on my chin is actually being torn apart. The ripping stops suddenly, leaving only a shadow of pain...until it happens again...another pinch that tears my chin...I writhe and whimper.

Again, I hear my mother yell...muffled in the distance. But she has finally mustered the courage to scream. I can tell she isn't screaming at me. This scream is different. It is defending me...

I don't know know what she said. But, I remember the doctor's response: "He can't feel a thing."

The pinches and ripping become more rapid. My mother continues to scream. All I do is cry.

...

Years later, my mother reminded me about this night. According to her, my uncle's grip slipped when he was throwing me. I hit the edge of the pool on the bottom of my chin. At the hospital, the doctors injected me with local anesthesia to numb the area, but they started to stitch me up no more than two seconds later. From what she could determine, that wasn't nearly enough time for the drug to take effect. She was yelling at the doctors, saying that I was in pain. And they kept telling her that I couldn't feel anything.

As I recall, it hurt like hell.

She suspects that the doctors knew they didn't wait long enough for my chin to numb up. We were at emergency room, at night, and in downtown Denver. She says the hospital was really busy when we got there. As she sat in the emergency room holding me, a man was holding his still bleeding gash on one arm while trying to fill out paperwork with the other. There was also two people on stretchers brought in on an ambulance; numerous other people were screaming, crying, or grumbling. She thinks the doctors rushed to get my relatively minor stitches done so they could move on to the others. They probably just didn't have enough staff to be considerate of me.

After that event, all I wanted to do was go back to the apartment. But the hospital staff wouldn't let me go. Someone kept asking me where my other bruises and scars came from. I don't know what I said. I just wanted out of there and kept asking to see my mom. She was in some different room with someone else asking her the same questions.

113

A hopeful discussion took place via the topic of science. As The Reader may already know, modern physics can be called a somewhat mystical area of study. According to the science, particles can be split and then sent vast distances from each other. Yet affecting one of the particles can instantly affect the other as though there was no distance between them. Physicists also describe light as behaving, either as waves or particles, depending merely on the presence of an observer. There is also the current prediction that the vast majority of our universe consists of dark matter--mysterious stuff that is said to have drastic effects on our universe but cannot be ever be directly observed.

The point is that, for all we have discovered, scientists are still confused. But they are coming to suspect that everything is somehow connected. Spiritual types have long been stating the same thing as fact. They posit that humans' inner and outer worlds are unified by what they might term "consciousness." All the spiritual types basically give the same requirement to this discovery: One cannot understand consciousness until he or she stops looking for answers in thought. Failure to meet this requirement is what the spiritual types say is keeping science from agreeing with them.

Now, we are still waiting for the hope part, right? We'll get there...Over the last 5000 years or so, there have been records of many famous spiritual types. Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammad, etc. Along with these few widely popular figures, there have been numerous less popular ones. For some reason,

they usually agree on another point: The current situation will soon end in disaster. Often they predict 1/3 to 2/3 of the human population will be wiped out.

Assuming this event has not already past, who do these prophesiers think will remain?

They like to refer in various ways to the "chosen ones." Could the upcoming transition be viewed in the more scientific term: evolution?

I've heard the proposition that there are currently two different kinds of humans co-existing on Earth. One is conscious of an existence beyond the mind's thought and the other is not. The previous group has been labeled Homo Noeticus...the latter is the better known Homo Sapien.

The evolutionary advantage Homo Noeticus have is the awareness of the unifying principle labeled consciousness. Homo Sapiens are running into problems because of their ignorance. Their science is running into unknowns. Their disconnection with the earth has resulted in poisoning their own habitat. Their limited perspective results in a life of selfish greed and fear, causing ongoing destruction of their own species.

Any Homo Noeticus is assumed to clearly see where Homo Sapiens are headed. They can sense the subtle energies that connect all things. They are in tune with nature. They do not cling to the idea of "mine." Possibly, these traits give them a survival advantage. If natural disasters and violence become more frequent or widespread, Homo Noeticus will not be the ones fighting Homo Sapien wars. They will not be the ones refusing to leave their home when it lies in the path of a hurricane. They will not go out to inspect the flopping fish when the tide

recedes suddenly. They will not refuse to start fresh when old social systems are failing.

Consciousness is defined as an intelligence beyond the mind. Only Homo Noeticus will be able to recognize and trust this intelligence. The fate of a Homo Sapien is left merely to other sources of information. Eventually, Homo Noeticus may establish themselves as the dominant species.

So, what might a world dominated by Homo Noeticus look like? Well, I suppose what ever they imagine it to be....[Whatever is created, it won't be driven by fear and greed. That should be a rosy enough picture for anyone.]

I am coming to agree that there are two types of humans in the world today. I can say this because I often sense a fundamental difference between certain individuals. I believe I can see it clearly in their eyes and within their actions.

I also agree that Homo Sapiens are out of balance with the world. The Earth and mankind are now enemies...and my bet is on the Earth.

It seems inevitable that current situations will drive more Homo Sapiens to make an evolutionary jump. I posit that it will happen instantly but on an individual level. Some people will be simply be shocked into it. As situations escalate, the necessary change for survival will be too obvious for some to resist.

Oh, yea, and the hopeful part I've been forgetting to mention...after Homo Sapiens are done flailing about, I hope Homo Noeticus will still have an Earth that can support them.

[It seems this book is continuing on as cynical as ever. The title has now evolved from "Yes, Yes, Yes" to "The Bitter Book of Anger".

Checking In

A message to The Reader:

I wish to take the time to see how we are doing. I have been prone to spilling out a bunch of ideas lately that stink of theory...and that troubles me.

I write about what I savor. And despite my anger, I enjoy writing. Yet, I only enjoy writing while I am savoring. (A later note: Editing simply sucks.)

As I savor watching two flies fuck, the mind again turns to the topic of creation. It was the way the flies parted after mating that stuck me. They simply cleaned themselves off and then flew their separate ways. People seem to have a remarkably un-flylike attitude to leaving creative moments.

We have a tendency to mull things over. To try and pick apart a moment in time--often within a fantasy about how that moment could have been better. And often times, we wish we could go back and alter the past due to this post experience analysis.

When is it time to alter a situation and when is it time to let it be?

One current strategy I see: Let be only when you cannot alter.

Another strategy: Let be when some set of minimum requirements are met.

My strategy: Let be when the savoring of mucking with things is gone.

Here I see The Reader with an opportunity for critique. I am clearly mulling over past writings and imagined reader responses--precisely the un-fly like response I just mentioned.

So, let us savor the fact I write savory tidbits about savoring that are slated to be published at a later date...long after the initial savoring has gone. And all the while, I'm convinced that my thoughts and stories can never contain the truth. I see them to be confined to being "about" something. Never of the thing itself. I savor how useless my words from the past are on their own. Will you savor that with me? Together? Right here...right now?

When discussing what you savor, I sense that another can trace the reference back to the source...the original experience...the thing itself...that continually exists now. This aspect tends to get lost in all the talk of the past.

I hope this letter aids your focus. I have an even higher hope that this letter is useless to you as I write to remind The Reader that, in reading, you create an experience--one with The Reader, The Book, and rest of the present situation.

This book is not about the characters, their adventures, and their ideas. This book is about writing and reading this book. Savor it, else you have not read it. And if you haven't read this book, then what are you doing?...Savor that.

Sincerely,
Manflesh

114

Today, the boy discovered his upcoming birthday falls on Ash Wednesday. Another tidbit revealed was that the girl, with whom he has completely fallen in love with, goes by the name Ashnar. He also noticed that Easter Sunday this year falls on April Fools Day.

Aside from the fun with the calendar today, Ashnar told the boy about one of her dreams. She was alone, on a boat, and in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The water was crystal clear and deep. The sun was shining on what was a calm, comfortable day. Ashnar began to get curious about what else was around her. She leapt up into the sky and flew around...checking the scenery for miles in every direction. The dream ended after she discovered no other humans in the world and returned to the boat...alone.

The boy relayed this dream to the guru and Annie. The guru asked Annie what she thought the dream meant. She responded that Ashnar feels isolated. She knows she has a depth that is rare and beautiful. However, she feels there is no one to share it with. She is curious about other people, but ultimately believes there is no way to really understand them. In the same way, she feels that no one can know who she really is.

To the boy, this was impressive. In all the events that have taken place over the last few days, he never told Annie or the guru about his talk with Ashnar by the bonfire. Annie had just put Ashnar's own words clearer than Ashnar could.

The boy recalled the fact that Ashnar returned to the boat after flying around. It seemed to be a resignation. What is

this feeling of isolation from the world? Perhaps Annie must know this same feeling well. Many people think they are on their own...lonely...distant. But, just a simple look around can tell anyone that they could not exist without the cosmos, the earth, other humans, plants, animals, and everything.

Who can say they are abandoned, isolated, alone? Who says that?

Who is that?...What are they made of?

116

The boy went down to the beach at night. Ashnar and a few others were cooking dinner. The rest of the beach crowd was sitting around drinking beers. The boy smoked a cigarette and then went down to the ocean to watch the waves under stars. The only other light came from the beach camp hundreds of paces back. The ocean was visible to him as a white streak that appeared periodically to stretch across the horizon before it faded away into darkness.

He wandered back to the beach restaurant and sat down with the drinkers. One conversation between two people involved places people had traveled in the past. Another person was passing around various post cards he had collected. One boy from Canada was asking a Mexican how to say "do you have a boyfriend" in Spanish.

After dinner, Ashnar sat next to the boy. She talked about getting sunburned earlier. Others around the table joined in with their sunburn stories. Next, Ashnar mentioned one of her dreams. Others around the table shared some dream stories. All of the conversations had the same feeling as typing about them does.

Space

filler.

It seems most people feel like conversation must be done. After adolescence, it is almost the only acceptable thing to do with strangers...well aside from execute brief pleasantries or ignore them completely. And there is another common activity between strangers. It was the one going on tonight: sitting together uncomfortably. And they weren't talking to avoid what people often poorly label as "uncomfortable silence." To the boy, everything said or not said was driven by discomfort. Every head there was constantly filled with voices...he could see it plainly on each face even when the mouth wasn't moving. Silence, uncomfortable or not, was far from taking place.

A few snippets of conversation kept resulting. "Do you have a boyfriend?" was being mispronounced so many times that pen and paper was needed as an aid. As you might expect, "where are you from?" and "how is the weather there?" made it to the party as well.

This was enough for the boy. He said good-bye to everyone and looked Ashnar in the eyes. She had been possibly silent for the last 30 minuets, and her body language indicated she wanted out of this situation. But it also indicated that she couldn't make up her mind about what else to do. She responded to his glance with a simple "goodbye."

So the boy heads home alone. That's ok...sometimes people don't want to be with you. But he wonders, if in this instance, the person who said "goodbye" to him was comprised of nothing but involuntary, internal conversation.

118

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What the the Coyote & Roadrunner cartoon routinely neglects to show are all the hours the Coyote sat alone...wishing the Roadrunner would come by. -- Manflesh

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There are many different kinds of "gurus" in the world today. Many of which are of the variety that would not call themselves gurus. I might term a guru as anyone (or anything) that helps reveal the true nature of your mind. The real ones only differ in the way they promote that particular revelation.

Revelation of the mind's contents is the key because only at that point does the subject have a choice to discontinue current thought. Once all thought forms are suspended, the world is no longer seen conceptually. Only observation of life...as it is...remains. And that can clear up a lot of confusion!

Revelation is made difficult by the way the mind operates. For better or worse, it is built to perform common operations in the background. The longer standing and more frequent a mode of operation is, the more difficulty in bringing it to the foreground.

For example, if you mind gravitates towards imaginary competition between ideas, a guru helps reveal that to you. One guru might constantly compete until the battle becomes absurdly obvious. Another guru may refrain from providing any opposing

ideas leaving the mind's desire for opposition frustrated into a breaking point.

If your mind is body conscious, the guru might push you to be nude in public. Or it may cover your biology up until it screams to be freed.

If your mind is doubtful, the guru may exaggerate contradiction...or appear so convincing that your mind has a different pattern for contrast.

The guru is your friend...but your mind's nemesis. Here is a how it played out once:

When the boy arrived back at the apartment. He found Annie in tears. The guru was making no attempt to comfort her. Actually, he was yelling at her. It sounded like this could go on for hours. The boy went to bed--opting again to wait for the morning summary.

The next morning at breakfast, the guru brought up the topic of last night's events. Both the guru and Annie each added details to form one story.

Annie had been talking about how deeply unconscious the world's inhabitants are. She ran through a list of people she knew and noted each of their particular variety of delusion. She hated the fact that humans seem to gravitate towards a life of self torture, fear, and violence towards others.

Annie was particularly troubled by the fact that any meaningful change in the current state of affairs seemed improbable. She reasoned that for every person who finally manages to catch a sniff of the roses, there are millions continually being born into situations that will inevitably drive them unconscious. She drew the analogy from these masses to cancer. She viewed the majority of humans as quickly

spreading, destructive parasites. And there was little room for the host to maintain a chance of survival. To her, the cancer is too aggressive and widespread to respond to treatment.

She reacted to the imagery she painted with anger. The guru did nothing to invalidate her bleak outlook. Rather, he completely agreed with her analysis.

His single mode of reaction only frustrated Annie more. She screamed at the guru, "Then why the hell do we bother talking to anyone?! None of them even want the truth! They all chicken out...they refuse to drop their prized bag of trash. Why keep traveling around and meeting the exact same people?! Why can't we just find some money and disappear into the mountains somewhere? Why do you insist on going through this pointlessness over and over?"

The guru responded, "Because you have not learned what you need to learn."

This was the final straw. The guru had just told her that she was completely correct. And now he was calling her an idiot. Annie knew he was just trying to insult her...and it worked. The guru had brought her anger out. She had no escape; all she could do was confront it and experience it deeply.

Annie had one terrifying night. She wound up trying to sob herself to sleep into the wee hours of the morning.

The boy believed he could relate to Annie's mindset. He has often thought our attempts to make a "better" world only quicken or prolong humanity's inevitable self-genocide. And the sad part to him: he saw humanity's doom as sealed only by mistaken assumptions. Often his emotional response to these thoughts was anger and sadness as well.

On this occasion over breakfast, both Annie and the boy stepped mentally through the exact same reasoning that had troubled them numerous times before. Yet, this time, neither of them responded with anger and sadness. They merely discussed the future they envision. Actually, they recount the details in good spirits.

What is the difference now? Perhaps Annie's anger and sadness is now suppressed--waiting in the background to pop up again at some later time? After just confronting these emotions for hours, perhaps they aren't buried. Is she just too exhausted to react strongly? Maybe...but she appears quite refreshed and energetic at breakfast. Somehow she displays a completely different reaction to what she sees as the current global situation. Has she changed???

Hmm....

Or has the global situation changed??? At minimum, our reaction to the current situation instantly becomes part of the situation.

Did Annie and the guru do something last night to change the world? Could it be that simple?

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More thoughts on tough emotions:

Being sad for no particular reason may be a common feeling. There are at least many different cases reported from various people. And the boy feels like he has had tastes of it himself. This emotion has even been portrayed as the central topic in a recent commercial for paper towels.

In Annie's case, she happened to be menstruating a while back when she last experienced this emotion. And on that occasion, the boy guessed she really didn't feel like much chatting about it. Like any ignorant male, all he could do is speculate about how menstruation affects women.

His imagination wonders if this reminder of childbirth...of life's creation...naturally gives women an intense, emotional bond to the Earth. And possibly this bond enhances sensitivity to what could be called a "global emotion." He wonders just how connected menstruation is to the pain every creation entails...

He wonders about all this until he remembers...again. He remembers how silly it is to try and explain what someone else feels. He remembers the impossibility of precisely explaining what he feels. He remembers how wrought with pitfalls trying to describe something he is not currently savoring is and just....

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Great Zen masters usually carry around a stick because often the student just needs a good whack. -- A Great Zen Master

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The boy was sitting in his room playing blackjack on the computer.

Blackjack is a strange game. After you learn your basic strategy, you can use most of your attention to focus on energies. It can feel a lot like sex, actually. Waves of ups and downs. Also, the mind will try to break your clarity of the game and its actuation. It will get puffed up when it wins and show its greed. It will deceive you into taking risks for the fantasy of a big win. It will get hurt when it looses. It will show its desperation to regain what it feels it has lost. It may even start to paint a heart pumping future fantasy full of disaster. Blackjack can show how your mind manipulates your actions according to its own idea of self-worth.

Blackjack can also help reveal how unstable and transitory the mind's moods are. When you are winning, you may feel happy. When you are loosing, you may feel sorrow. And the flip between the two can happen in a matter of seconds.

This is even more impressive when all this can take place even without playing for money. The mind can become greedy for the change in a few pixels on a computer screen. Play "for fun"

and see how controlled your *actual* mood is by an imaginary number in a made up game.

There's another new school of Enlightenment. Playing blackjack. And if you think you can't be phased by such a silly endeavor, take the equivalent of your monthly expenses to the casino. Bet at least 1% of that amount on each hand. See if you have the same outlook on the event after a few hours.

Back in your mental image of San Blas, the boy had tripled his money by the time a knock came on the door. Ashnar walked in. They began to talk and kiss for a while as she undressed. She was hesitant, though...The boy wondered if she was afraid to loose something or was desperate to regain something.

The situation that was being played out reminded the boy of his discussion earlier that very day with the guru. The guru had brought up the subject of how doubtful people can be during the mating game. The female usually puts on a display of invitation; the male follows with performance of the dance called "pursuit." Yet despite mutual attraction, sometimes the male backs down. And sometimes the female revokes her invitation.

Acting on an attraction often feels complicated and stressful to people. Maybe they just got out of a bad relationship. Maybe they are still in a relationship. Maybe they don't know what to say or do and fear rejection. Maybe they have concerns about their body...what other people think...a tendency to dream up potential future complications...guilt...who knows. Any number of fears can prevent an attraction from becoming union.

The guru explained that wisdom is knowing what the present moment calls for. A wise person sees what someone wants and

they also see when only fear prevents it. With this insight, they skillfully can apply the right kind of pressure, at the right time, to someone on the edge of breaking free. The guru shared a story about his first wife as an example.

He and his wife had met during a class where they were learning how to type. After meeting each other the first day, they were so attracted that they ran off and slept together right after class. He could tell that having sex with someone she just met was a new and exciting experience for her. He suspected her excitement was the main reason why she was able to go through with it. And the next day, that thrill would be gone. He predicted that she would attempt to retreat from him due to shame and fear.

Sure enough, the next afternoon she arrived to class a little late. The two made eye contact as she came through the door, and she quickly glanced away. She sat down in a chair on the opposite side of the room from the guru. At this point, the guru stood up and said loud and clear, "Don't sit over there. Come and sit by me." She got up after a little hesitation, with her head down, and sat next to the guru. He whispered in her ear, "Now they all know. No point in hiding it anymore."

The guru concluded his story, "We were married for 20 years. When I met her, she had been battling with bulimia for 8 years. And the doctors told her she could not have children. After three miscarriages, we had 5 beautiful children. I agreed to stay with her until the kids were grown up--and I did loving every day of it. Now...had I not stood up in class that second day and pushed her, I don't know if we ever would have gotten together, again. But I do know this: You know what you know when you know it. Don't back down."

Back in the boy's bedroom, he watched these analogies blur with reality. Ashnar had come over, but now she was backing away.

The boy asked her, "What is wrong?"

Ashnar shrugged her shoulders.

"Ok, why did you come here?"

She said shyly, "I don't know."

"Let me repeat. Why did you walk to my house...come in...knock on my door...start kissing me...and take your shirt off... What exactly do you want?"

"I'm not sure...I think I made a mistake."

The boy climbed on top of her. And she pushed him back. He climbed off her but remained close. She said bluntly, "I should go."

Ashnar got up and put her shirt back on. She headed for the door but hesitated, again. Then she turned toward the boy. "Do you want me to come by in the morning and make you breakfast for your birthday?"

That was when the boy knew what he knew.

"No, I want you here in the morning for my birthday."

"Ok. Fine." She said with her head down. She reached for the doorknob and added, "Maybe I will see you tomorrow."

"I want to see you tonight. Sit down and tell me what is wrong. You are putting out some confusing signals."

Ashnar hesitated again and then walked back to the bed and sat down. "Ok, I'm sorry. You didn't know? Ok. Well...Hmm." Ashnar fell silent for a bit. "You really don't know?"

The boy looked her in the eyes and shook his head no.

"Ok, of course. I'm sorry...How should you know...It is...well...that time of the month."

"So that is it?" The boy couldn't hold in a little chuckle of disbelief. "I could care less. You are a woman. I know that. Take your clothes off and climb into bed. I want you *right now*. Trust me...it doesn't matter."

Ashnar took her clothes off and climbed back into bed. Immediately the boy flipped her on her back. He hovered over her and kissed her lips, her breasts, and her stomach. She closed her legs...sensing where he was headed. He grabbed her thighs and pressed them open. He continued to hover, not budging and continued a demanding stare into her eyes. She finally relaxed as he went down on her. They fucked for hours and cuddled late into the night.

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Two days ago, Ashnar got a new job at the beach camp. Previously, her duties were to clean tables, rake the sand, and pick up trash. Now, her only task is to paint a mural in the bathroom. She was given free reign to create in any design she wanted. And as a result of the job change, her only scheduled day off during the week switched to Wednesday. Today is her day off...Ash Wednesday...the boy's birthday. The two woke up and decided to spend the best day ever together.

The lovers sipped on coffee in bed. Afterwards, they went down to the market and bought ingredients for breakfast. On the menu were omelets packed with vegetables and excellent swiss cheese, mangos, and passion fruit. Next, they went down to the beach for a swim and a mud fight. Then it was back to the boy's place for a shower and more sex. For the sunset, they went to the old Spanish fort overlooking the town and shared a six pack. In the evening, they headed back to the plaza and fed each other ice cream as they giggled.

The church at the edge of the plaza was holding an all night service. People in town were milling about the plaza with crosses on their foreheads drawn with ashes. Some of the crosses were placed high on the forehead. Others were low. Some were off-center. Others were slanted to one side.

The boy smoked a cigarette and ashed it in his hand. He spit on the ash and used the filter of the cigarette as a brush. After drawing a cross on Ashnar's forehead, he told her, "You look holy as fuck right now."

Her response was, "I feel sacrilegious."

The boy said, "I think you know more about Christ than just about anyone else baring that cross."

Ashnar laughed. And so did the boy. But she was dismissive; the boy was just laughing. He was reminded of a saying by Christians that became popular a few years back. The saying goes: "What Would Jesus Do?" The boy's response within his head to this memory was: "Certainly he wouldn't be guiding his own actions by the question 'what would I do?' in between moments of worshiping himself."

124

The guru, Annie, the baby, and the boy went outside with a digital camera. For some time now, they have been joking around about being a homeless, woeful bunch stuck in Mexico. The homeless part is essentially true. They have an apartment now, but it feels more like crashing at a place provided by a stranger's generosity. In less than a month, they will be out of cash and could quite easily be stuck out on the street in Mexico. The woeful part is the joke...but it might not be so funny if they don't get something going soon.

They walked down the street to an abandoned apartment building. It was built many years ago to contain about twenty units. In its current state, all the windows are long gone. The rear portion is disintegrating to rubble. The courtyard contains one tree, a bunch of trash, and frequent flashes of rats scavenging in the corner of an onlooker's eye. There is an open courtyard in the center where one family sits eating watermelon. Their dinner table consists of plywood atop cinder blocks, surrounded by soda crate chairs.

The guru handed the camera to the boy. "We need one of us in front of our new home."

The boy snapped a picture of the guru and Annie holding their baby by the front entryway. During the photo shoot, the family inside had taken an interest. The guru gestured to ask if it would be ok to take some pictures inside. The family consented with only a moderate amount of confusion. The guru and Annie sat down at the dining table and the residents offered them some watermelon. The guru respectfully declined as the boy

snapped another photo of them all conversing over a watermelon brunch.

After taking a few more pictures, the group gave their thanks, donated some pesos to the family, and headed back home. It was time to build some reality. The guru sat at the computer and began to type.

Dear everyone,

We have yet to disclose our whereabouts and the details of our situation. This was kept secret from all of you to hinder any further attempts to "help" us.

Even to this point, months after the intervention, none of you have ever asked us if we needed help. Without ever speaking to us...how did all of you decide Annie needed your aid before? On what information did you all conclude that our child was in danger? Many of those eager to "help" haven't even seen or talked to Annie for over five years! How can you justify your attempt to separate a mother from her newborn baby and her husband? Why were you so ready to assume control a family you do not know?

Let me repeat...before and after we left, NONE of you have ever bothered to ask us if we needed help. But you decided we did anyway. Well, here is your chance. Now, we are *actually* in need of help. And we write to tell you what kind of help we need.

After being forced out into the cold by your ambush, we hitched rides to Mexico. In Mexico, we found a generous family that took us in. As you can see from the attached photos, our situation is less than optimal. We need money

for plane tickets back to England where we can live a stable and healthy life off my disability status.

At the intervention, many of you said that you wanted to help us. Do you really?

We wait to find out the true nature of your generosity.

xxxxxxxx

Children's Story #7

At the market today, a husband, wife, and their little boy were shopping. The parents stopped at a street vendor that was selling some shiny rocks and jewelry. The couple was examining some of the shiny rocks when the little boy reached up--wanting to hold one. The parents hesitated for a moment...and then handed one of the rocks to the child.

The boy held the rock up and parodied his parents by constantly saying, "Wow! Wow! Wow!" The entire time, the child's eyes were on his parents' faces...not the shiny rock. The boy was getting great pleasure in the parents happily echoing back an affirming "wow."

The parents turned their attention back to the street vendor to negotiate prices. Relatively unattended, the boy sat down on the ground. Within reach, he located another rock and started playing with the two stones together.

The parent's attention quickly returned to the boy when they heard some banging. He was smacking the two rocks together. The mother snatched the shiny rock out of his hand and scolded sharply. The boy reacted with a whimper and began to cry as he was scooped up into her arms. The mother placed the shiny rock back on the table and turned to the vendor apologetically. Again unattended, the boy wined and squirmed under his mother's tight grasp.

125

Today the group sits discussing human addiction. So far, the most popular treatment program devised has been alcoholics anonymous (AA). So effective is this program at obtaining participants that it has been adapted to many other targets of addiction--narcotics, sex, lip balm, and addiction to addicts (al-anon) to name a few.

Two of the people that were present at Annie's intervention each have been active in AA for over 20 years. Annie views them as AA "missionaries." Ever since joining the organization, they have dedicated their life to it. Annie doubts they see AA as their new addiction.

These missionaries were probably alcoholics because they were angry, depressed, and looking for an escape. They now spend their life fighting alcoholism--angry, depressed, and looking for an escape. But to them, they probably don't hold the view that they haven't really changed. Annie says they seem to display their sobriety like a medal indicating success in battle. (I imagine this self affirmation does a lot to justify an addictive lifestyle--probably a lot like rewarding yourself with a drink after a hard day.)

If the end result is still anger, depression, and a life controlled by alcohol; what is this "sobriety" people struggle so hard to achieve? Well, perhaps it saves the money normally spent on booze...but wait...

The group looked for alcohol treatment centers on the internet. Often, they charge \$20-40 thousand a month. Annie notes that many addicts relapse and return to treatment multiple

times. And, while we're talking about money, all of these clinics seem to accept donations. Even with all this money flowing in, these organizations are classified to the outside as "non-profit." Just where does the booze money go?

The group was stumped on this issue. The only information they could relate involved "non-profit" churches. Annie recalled talking to a man that worked for the IRS. He had seen the priests from big churches making upwards of \$500,000 a year. And the guru recalled his time as a Christian minister in Atlanta, Georgia. The head of a large church there was making \$400,000 annually...and that was 20 years ago...

What do the execs at AA or the Betty Ford Clinic make? A quick search on the internet didn't produce any statistics.

Convincing addicts that you can provide help has been a successful strategy. In shifting people from one addictive outlet to one you provide, these people's cash naturally flows your direction, too. Very smart...

First, let the addictive personalities develop. Then label the current target of addiction "bad" and redirect the addictive tendency your way. As any red, white, and blue blooded American knows, repeat customers are good for business.

Here's a group someone could start (if it doesn't already exist): Money Addicts Anonymous.

Annie continues: "I'm wholly disinterested in attempting to defend programs such as AA. What matters to me is: every AA 'success story' I have ever heard sounds like a scripted speech. It feels so ingenuine. Underneath, I usually see a person that is saddened because they no longer longer have the guts to go get a drink. They are afraid of booze. They cannot trust themselves. They lack freedom..."

[Just like a writer that would want to use "ingenuine" but change it to "insincere" only because the dictionary says the former isn't a word?]

126

The boy met two people from Canada, today. Tom and Laura. Tom spent most of this interaction trying to get the boy to think highly of him. He was a judge in an world-wide marijuana growers' competition held in Amsterdam. He added that he grows five different strains back home that are "all better than anything at the competition." Next, he mentioned he had almost exclusive knowledge of a peyote patch nearby. While discussing his acquisition of elaborate and traditional peyote preparation rituals from very special people, he made an effort to preempt any comments from the boy to produce the goods or show him the peyote patch.

Since the boy reactions to his drug knowledge didn't provide much self-affirmation, Tom began to spout poetry by E.E. Cummings and recounted his one-on-one meeting with the Dali Lama. This brought him into his personal philosophy. Here's a basic overview:

"The whole problem with people is all in the mind. If you rid your mind of your 'ego,' your false self, your life will be simpler. But the problem is that we have a mental dependency on thinking in terms of our ego. Somehow you have to break your addiction."

The boy finally reacted with interest, "How do you break your addiction?"

Tom quickly responded, "Meditation is the key. You must stop your thought process completely. Then you will realize that the ego was just a mental construct."

The boy gave Tom a wide-eyed look of further inquisition.

Tom switched out of his prophetic mode. He confessed, while looking down at the ground, that he had a problem with falling asleep during meditation. Tom perked up again and relayed that he posed his problem to the Dali Lama himself. His holiness personally suggested that Tom mentally levitate an image of a golden Buddha during his meditation. The trick was to never let the image of the golden Buddha 'fall.'

The boy questioned Tom: "But, this Buddha is really worthless, right?"

Tom responded. "Well, no. It is an image you use for the mind. When you get tired in meditation, it starts to fall or fade. Then you have to wake up a little in order to keep the image."

"So let me make sure I understand...To stay focused, you are trying to maintain an image in your mind."

"Yes."

"And the point is to keep this image solid, vibrant, and floating before you at all costs."

"Yes."

"Sounds exhausting...even tiring."

"Heh, well..."

"Has it worked?"

Tom sat up a little. "My stamina has increased drastically."

"So you could meditate...say, for maybe...three days without getting sleepy?"

"No, not that long yet...Well, I've never tried...I think I would fall asleep before I made it that far."

The boy thought for a while. "It still sounds exhausting...but maybe exhaustion is the point of the golden Buddha...maybe its purpose is to give you a mental task so

arduous that the mind finally gives up?...So you finally stop thinking about everything--including the golden Buddha?"

[The boy had chosen not to say things exactly the way it first came to him. In a less filtered form, the boy thought the Dali Lama picked up a piece of garbage, called it Buddha, and told Tom to worship trash. The whole point, whether the Dali Lama knew it or not, was for this man to figure out the true nature of this task: thinking of Buddha is just more mental trash. But now, Tom has fallen in love with his little teaching--straight from the holy orifice of the Dali Lama himself. Even if the boy was completely correct, Tom resisted the possibility. He is now addicted to Buddha.

Buddhists Anonymous

Meditators Anonymous

Thinkers Anonymous

The last is my personal favorite. Heheh. Fucking brilliant. I would love to go to a meeting. Can you see everyone? Sitting around in a circle talking about thinking...thinking about thinking...Heheh. Yep, you have a problem all right.]

The other Canadian, Laura, sat silent during Tom's display. The boy turned towards her as Tom was trying to re-levitate his golden Buddha. The boy offered Laura a cigarette to get things going. She accepted happily and they lit up. Then, Laura spoke her first words:

"I'm reminded of a conversation we [Tom and I] had yesterday. I don't think you can so easily discount your 'self' as false. To me, the self is just another part of our experience. But you still need to discover what your 'self' is."

The boy asked, "How would I do that?"

Laura went silent for a moment. She responds after a few puffs on her cigarette, "I guess I don't really know...I do remember an experience of running into a shaman in a small Mexican town...about 8 years ago. We all took peyote and it was a really amazing experience. Everything was completely fluid. It seemed like everything was happening so naturally...and without effort. Things continued on for days like that. Even after the peyote had long since worn off. But later on, I was no longer able to maintain that state...

I long to return back to that state. Back then I knew I was truly myself. It seems I can't get back there, though. I've spent the rest of my life trying. Actually, that is part of why I'm back in Mexico...I'm hoping it will spark something, again."

The boy waited to make sure Laura had finished speaking. Then he questioned, "So you've spent quite a few years trying to get back a 'fluidity' to your life that you feel you lost. Is that what you are saying?"

"Oh, yes. Definitely."

"And you want nothing more than to get it back?"

"That is all I really care about anymore."

"What were you like in this state of fluidity? What did you do?"

"Um...What did I do?..."

"Yeah. I'm asking how you spent your day...when you felt fluid."

"Well, just normal stuff. Traveled a little. Met some people. Ate. Had fun...Whatever I wanted, I guess."

The boy smiled at her and then looked at the scene around them while raising his glass in a toast, "It sounds like you are doing that right now."

"Well, I suppose you are right," she said discontentedly.

"I think the only difference is that now you are *searching*. Back then you weren't."

She perked up a little. "I think you are right on."

"So, you are searching...but you don't like searching. Do you see the contradiction? Searching is the strain on your life...the discontent...the struggle. You hate it but you won't stop. Maybe you should stop searching. Give that up. And just see what happens."

Laura thought for a while with her head down. "You may be right. But I've been searching for so long. I don't know if I can quit."

"Beware of thinking in terms of how to do it. That is more searching...just watch how you torture yourself, over and over, with this desire to be someone you aren't. This resistance to enjoying the life you already have. One day, you will decide you are sick of living in that insanity. And you will just stop."

Laura looked at the boy with gracious eyes, "Well, I will try. Thank you."

The boy jumped in quick. "Oh, GOD NO!! Don't *try*. That's searching again! Do you see? You think I am giving you something to work on...a new way to search. A new direction to improve your search....look closely...Do you see how quickly you resort to searching? You just turned what I said into a different method...You have to be able to see that. Watch how addicted you are to searching...watch it sneak in. Trust me. There is nothing to gain. Give it up."

Laura looked at the boy as if she failed, "Hmm. Interesting...I'm glad we met."

The boy saw that Tom and Laura were both going to sit and think things over. Unfortunately, it seemed there was little he could do to stop it. He got up and excused himself to disrupt the moment and allow himself to move on.

Seekers Anonymous

Self-Abusers Anonymous

128

What motivates the boy to "help" others? Is it just for a selfish feel good reward? Is he even helping anyone? Does he even think that he ever helps anyone?

129

Despite now having a kitchen, the group still goes out to eat often. The restaurant on this day housed a wide-screen TV with football (aka soccer in the states). The business was completely packed, but all the workers were more interested in the TV than the customers.

The guru said while they waited: "The man we met last night from Liverpool told me his team beat Sheffield recently 4-0."

Annie responded, "He wasn't serious...was he?"

"Oh, he was serious. He asked about my accent and I told him I spent a lot of time in Sheffield. Then he spouted off the game results...he had this smug look on his face. He was actually proud. I told him that I haven't seen the team play in 40 years and walked away."

The boy remembers his friends back in Minnesota. There were nights that he had a lot of fun. And then, there were nights that he could barely stand being around them. His attitude towards his friends usually coincided with the outcome of a recent sporting event they all had an interest in. The effect was even more drastic when the friends watched a particular game together.

The football game went to a commercial. This prompted the server to come by and take the group's order. The 40-something server seemed like he hadn't smiled in years. The guy looked well off. Maybe, he was even part of the family that owned this popular restaurant. The group guessed he could even be considered wealthy for the area. But, for some reason, the man was depressed. From the superficial picture they painted, it

seemed this guy should have nothing to complain about. Yet his face clearly showed he was constantly complaining inside.

The guy has to know something is amiss. Doesn't he? Yet, it seems that day, he had no energy to do anything about it. These are the saddest people on the planet. The ones that are so depressed they can't even consider suicide.

The boy contrasted this worker with someone like Ashnar. Ashnar knows there is something amiss inside. But she wants to do something about it. Something drives her to keep on testing life's nature. When he met her, she seemed to have been broken down. All she presented to the boy was her outer shell. But this shell was shed quickly. And underneath there she has an intensity to her that few others can harbor. All she needed was a little oxygen. A little breath of fresh air. And now the fire is burning bright, again. The boy wasn't the only one that had noticed. Down at the beach more than one person told him that she was really happy right now.

Ashnar's shell seemed to exist for some sort of protection. She was simply scared. And the moment she stopped trying to protect herself from harm, she was alive. Security versus insecurity. We are drawn towards the first. But why? Does anyone understand security's horrible nature? The server was secure. All the friends back in Minnesota are secure. Ashnar was trying her damndest to be secure. Yet nobody seems happy in what we call security.

With life (certainly?) being uncertain, why do we insist on our feeble attempts at security? Really, how secure can you be when a point or two in a game on the television can dictate the rest of your day? And then there is cancer, getting hit by a bus, houses on fire, stubbed toes, and sneezes.

Earthquakes and burnt cake, STD's from a one night fling and a lost wedding ring, the apocalypse and chapped lips, company downsizing and terrorists flying, faulty child safety seats, muggings on the street, carbon monoxide leaks.

Where is there security? What is security? A locked door? Anti-bacterial soap? A loaded gun nearby? A 401k? Is there any way anyone can actually be secure? What kind of attitude would you need? How could one live life and yet remain untroubled?

My questions are golden rubbish.

129.5

The boy usually buys cigarettes from a store down the street. Sometimes that store has run out so he goes to a different one.

The group was eating at a restaurant. Halfway through their meal, a stranger walked in looking for a place to sit. There were no empty tables available. The stranger approached the group and asked if he could share their table. The group said that would be fine.

It rains sometimes.

130

The boy went to the internet shop. It has been about a week since he had checked it last. His inbox contained roughly ten messages. "Find sex tonight" one subject line read. Two others were for cheap Viagra and pain killers. The boy was also specially selected to receive "insider information" on stock purchases.

One email was from a friend in California. He wrote one line: Where are you Now?

The boy replied with a short message--"Mexico"--and then proceeded to the next email. It was a happy birthday from his previous roommate in Minnesota. He wrote to tell the boy that his friends would be celebrating despite his absence. Also, the email added, "Thought I should let you know that Anna Nichole Smith died recently."

The last few emails were a string of four...each from the boy's parents. They all said essentially the same thing, but one had the unique title of: "Happy Birthday"

Here is the content (paraphrased):

Happy Birthday...hope you are well...how are you?...where are you?...wish you would write back...wondering about you...are you ok?...why don't you reply?...I have a birthday present but I don't know where to send it...would really like to hear from you...it has been two weeks now...hope everything is ok...write back...love mom and dad.

The content as the boy sees it (paraphrased):

Happy Birthday...here is your present: WORRY!...love mom and dad.

Gee thanks, how did you know? A box full of worry! Just what I wanted! The boys response to his parents (not paraphrased):

Hi mom and dad,

I'm fine. Everything is fine. In fact, I've never been happier. I'm doing exactly what I want with my life. I couldn't have gotten here without you. I appreciate everything you have done to raise me. I am especially grateful that you taught me to think for myself. You have always supported all my decisions along the way. And because I love you, and because you allow me to be open, I am able to be honest about how I feel.

I am getting tired of writing these emails. All you want is a response to your worry. No matter how many times I tell you I am doing well...you still worry. No matter what I do...you still worry. Writing an email to you every day wouldn't end your worry. If you weren't worrying about me, you would worry about money, your retirement, your jobs, your daughter, your granddaughters, your parents, your health, your upcoming vacation, future houseguests, what to eat for dinner, etc.

You want me to respond so you can stop worrying about me. But really what you want is to stop worrying altogether. Do you see that no amount of emails from me

can give you what you really want? Do you see why it is pointless for me to respond to these emails? Do you see how this email will likely only cause you more worry? (i.e. what is wrong with our son...why is he so mean to us all the sudden)

Let me be even more clear. Your worry only tortures yourself. Your worry is of no use to me.

Love,

Your son

Worriers anonymous

Parents of honest children anonymous

131

A question to the world:

Where are all the strangers with Whoppie Cushions?

And a dream I had of you:

We sit on a remote footbridge that crosses a mountain stream on a moonless night. We watch as a person approaches down one side of the mountain towards us. We do nothing to alert this person of our presence in the darkness. The passerby nearly steps on us before he is startled to find us seated in his path. He goes around us without comment...but turns back after a few steps. "You shouldn't be sitting there. People don't see you."

I respond, "Ok. Thank you for the advice...Good night."

We sit for a few minutes listening to the black mountain stream below the star riddled sky. Three wavering drunks are laughing and singing as they approach down the same path. They walk three abreast and are linked arm-in-arm to steady each other down the craggy mountainside. They navigate past us on the narrow bridge by rotating their formation into single file. They are forced to sidestep as they maintain the linked arms between them. They give a friendly "hello" to us as they pass, rotate back to three abreast, and continue on. Minutes later, we can still hear their laughter reaching down to us from the darkness.

132

A large church is located across a street from the town plaza. There is a constant traffic on this street--mainly pedestrian with some bicyclists and a few cars. Tonight the sun is already down. The church is holding a late night service. A few people are still walking up the church's front stairs and entering the service already in progress. But most people are just passing by...

There is a high percentage of passers-by that cross their heart as they continue on their way. Some of them do it quickly...in a fashion that strikes the boy as routine. Most pass by without giving the church any notice.

But there is another small group. These pass by the church and then pause for a moment before crossing their heart with intension. The pause is what interests the boy most. Prior to it, they were going about their travels. Afterwards, they are alone with whatever the church means to them. The boy watches the content of their world change drastically and almost instantly sometime during this pause.

There is a similar pause in transitioning back to travel on the street. But this one is more gradual. It seems more of a blending of the two worlds...whereas the previous pause was more of a replacement. The intrusive church lingers...it has become a welcomed companion to the traveler. As they continue on, the walls of the church visibly extend.

136

[Scene takes place at the boy's apartment. Ashnar and the boy sit on the balcony overlooking the street down below. They sip on beers while the boy starts a conversation.]

"I think you are a warrior."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean a warrior. A 'Warrior of Light' is probably a better way to say it... Spiritually minded folks maybe come in three varieties. There are the meditators, the do-gooders, and the warriors. The first hope the false-self will eventually dissolve. The second hope the false-self will be forgotten. The third hope the false-self will self-destruct."

"Who would ever choose the first two?"

"Most people, actually. And I see the choice largely depending on courage. The warrior path is risky...insecure. You have to jump into everyday insanity and duke it out--knowing you will likely get hurt and rejected. In fact, it will probably kill you."

"But you're going to die anyway. I'd rather die trying than hiding."

"That is why I call you a Warrior of Light. And I can guess that throughout your whole life people have looked at you strange. But I don't think that they see you the way I do. They probably just think you are crazy...maybe depressed...irresponsible...or just confused...As the old saying goes, 'The most firmly established in the path appears the most remiss.'...Warriors of Light live spontaneously and are

therefore unpredictable. Not bound by rigid rules of society... morality. They fit no archetype. Etc... You cannot say what a warrior of light looks like. And so their true identity remains invisible to most."

"I agree, but I still feel like I go by my own moral code."

"Ok...describe your moral code."

"Well, I can't really describe it. I just feel like sometimes I know what I 'should' do. Maybe 'should' isn't the right word. Sometimes it feels like I don't have a choice. I feel compelled...like I know what I *have to* do."

"Ok, describe a situation where you have to act a certain way."

"Again, it is hard to describe. I guess I don't know what I have to do until I'm in the situation."

"So, your morality depends entirely on the situation at that time?"

"Exactly."

"So, there is no set morality? Could I call you *amoral*?"

"That's a good way to put it...but what would you call this feeling like there is a 'right' thing to do?"

"Well, the more truth you discover for yourself, the more free you are to act without preconceived notions. And the truth is that you care about true freedom. Sometimes you clearly see how to choose freedom and that feels 'right.' And you choose freedom no matter what others think. Willingness to listen to that impulse and boldly act based on your own inner wisdom is why I call you a Warrior of Light."

"I love the way your hat casts shadows on your face."

"And that is why I call you a Warrior of Light...ehheheh."

[Change scenes to later that same night in the town plaza. The boy and Ashnar sit underneath a tree on one edge of the town plaza. There are about three dozen other humans of all ages in small groups throughout the plaza.]

Ashnar kissed the boy on the cheek and got up to hunt for a restroom. The boy watched as she weaved through a few people. Halfway across the plaza she hikes her skirt up a little and begins to skip. Every few hops, a glimpse of her thigh-high black stockings flash above her knee-high black boots. The boy smiles as the entire plaza makes her the center of attention. A few teenage boys stare hard and then whisper to each other. A few teenage girls drill a scowl to Ashnar's back after she passes by. A small group of elderly Caucasian travelers glance at her with confusion. A Mexican mother glances and then quickly looks away--shaking her head in disapproval.

The boy sits watching this whole scene, chuckling quietly to himself. He thinks, "Nothing makes people uncomfortable like seeing someone else openly happy."

The plaza forgets about Ashnar shortly after she vanishes into a building. The boy goes back to drinking a large beer. There is a young Mexican child seated directly above the boy on a bouncing tree branch.

After a minute or so, Ashnar reappears from the building across the plaza. The tree branch stops bouncing. Again, all eyes follow Ashnar as she walks. Just before she reaches the boy, the young Mexican drops down from the tree. He walks away slowly--double taking on Ashnar with a look of curiosity that also could be well termed as suspicion.

The boy says to Ashnar as she smiled at him, "You look incredible." He gestures towards the plaza, "So good, in fact, that it makes them anxious. Yet, everyone can't take their eyes off you...including me."

Ashnar's smile turned desirous. "I'm only dressed this way for *your* eyes." She hiked up her skirt a little and straddled the boy. "I wish I didn't know of their morality right now. I would love to do something amoral, right now, right here...and let them watch."

"What, like chew with your mouth open?"

"Oh! Pizza! I almost forgot!" Ashnar jumped up and pulled the boy to his feet. She dragged him through the plaza with her two big black boots quickly leading the way. At the other end of the plaza, they passed two stray dogs having sex.

Ashnar commented as she continued with large strides. "They get to fuck in the street...why don't we?"

"Oh, we can." The boy said with a sly smile. "Nothing can stop Warriors of Light from doing what they want. They are too skillful. They always find a way."

The two smiled at each other in that sexy way only lovers can.

[Scene changes to Ashnar and the boy walking into the boy's apartment. Their arms are around each other's back. They reemerge after a moment on the balcony above the street. Quickly, they start shedding clothes as they kiss and begin to fuck. Every thirty seconds or so people walk by on the street directly below them. Not one of the twenty odd people that pass by look up and notice the sex scene above them. The two lovers

finish with their bodies glistening in the moonlight. They kiss for a while and hold each other in their naked arms.]

[screen fades to black]

Voice of James Earl Jones: "Some say, 'The revolution will not be televised.'... But this statement is not quite correct. The revolution will always be televised. Only most people won't notice anything revolutionary about it."

[screen fades in to find Ashnar and the boy sitting on the balcony. Now dressed they smoke cigarettes blowing slow moving plumes skyward. The boy starts a conversation, again.]

"I just thought of something connected to our discussion of morality."

"Oh?"

"Yeah. It goes something like this: Most people think they are someone, right? They give themselves a story involving their past, dreams, likes, dislikes, etc. And they call that person my 'self.'"

"Ok, with you so far."

"Well, if this person is just a construct of thought...of the imagination...it would be fair to call it imaginary. A dream character."

"Yeah..."

"In order for there to be a dream character, doesn't there have to be a dreamer? And, this dreamer would not be imaginary, correct?"

Ashnar nods in agreement.

"Now, take a person that somehow broke their association with the dream character. Naturally, all they are left with is their connection to the dreamer. Remember, this dreamer is not a construct of the mind...not imaginary. We could call it the 'real' self."

Ashnar thought for a while and conceded, "I can accept that."

"This person, completely aware of their real self, would be able to use that information to guide their actions. They would be acting directly out of something real. And every action this person takes would be a pure expression of reality. They would be constantly espousing truth...regardless of whether their actions are called good or bad."

"Well, this person may still choose to act 'morally.' I mean, they might know that doing something would land them in jail or something. And then they would choose to avoid that."

"Oh...yeah...definitely. It still is true that dreams of society's morality apply here. Consider that part of the reality this person clearly sees...they see it clearly as an imaginary construct."

"Yeah...um...what is your point then?"

"What I'm getting at, is that we are talking about a character that acts with a direct connection to truth...even though most people in the world are unaware of their similar connection. Now, wouldn't every interaction this person has be forcing other people to confront something real? Take an average person...just walking along...lost in their dreams...then...bang, someone real walks up and asks them for directions. And note that this reality I speak of is one we all share...not a personal dreamland...Wouldn't any interaction by

this person of truth give the other person a window on reality...one that might not otherwise be there?"

"Well, I think some people would be so lost in their dreams as to not notice any difference. But for others, they would probably sense something. Even if they aren't able to put their finger on it."

"Yeah, I suspect you are right." The boy paused as he puffed on his cigarette. "Even though it might sound like it, I'm not really trying to prove a point here. I'm just trying to explain that I'm struck by how lovely living your own life can be. It doesn't matter one bit what this person does...be it called moral or immoral...this person is just a constant, undeniable, valid, fact. The simplicity of this person's life is what strikes me...like a calm moonlit night."

"mmmmmm...."

[The boy and Ashnar return to smoking and watching the empty, moonlit Mexican street below.]

139.5

Who are you?...Again:

The boy got an email from an old acquaintance back in Minnesota. The old friend was surprised to hear that he had picked up and left for Mexico. Unable to fathom the boy would do such a thing, the emailer was searching for information to update his character profile via the question: "What do you do for money?"

The boy responded this time with:

It is my job to explore mediums to more efficiently express myself.

The job pays pretty well, actually. When I find a medium that loves me, the medium naturally creates a way to completely support a corresponding lifestyle. The only drawback is that the job is not all that secure. Any time I claim ownership of any expression of myself, my contract states "the expressor is instantaneously suspended from all employment expression duties and benefits until said expressor relinquishes any and all claims."

I view myself as a mercenary of sorts. I suicide bomb any person, organization, or other thought that compromises my self-expression. If a lapse in attention results in me being captured and incarcerated, I must escape. In these instances, often help mysteriously shows up if needed, but I imagine that for security reasons, my superior can never directly be implicated as an accomplice.

My object and solitary oath is to terrify any concession of myself.

Interestingly, I just found out the title of my occupation roughly translates into English as: "Transmitter of Satan's impotence."

(note: a few days after writing this email, the boy had yet to get a response. He wrote this person again, anyway.)

Ok, ok. I'll be honest with you. I got a job in Mexico as a designer--a designer of life's themes.

The initial theme is passed up to me. Then I observe the theme and add a compatible design. What makes this particular job difficult isn't in coming up with the design itself. The tough part is that I'm required to maintain the design in my mind a specific way. It must exist as a constant and complete entity simultaneously with all of my present activities.

So, I simply maintain the design in the correct way. This is the extent of my job duties. As long as do my part, the universe handles the rest by creating situations that contain that design's theme. It is interesting to note that the actual design is never realized. It only is maintained in my mind to enable the theme to appear. My designs are never implemented "as-is" in order to prevent me from abusing my power (and to keep my job interesting).

(note: a few days after writing this email, the boy still had no response from this person. He was compelled for some reason to keep pushing...probably just because it was fun.

Seriously though, I landed a gig as a projectionist at this relatively obscure place called "God's Theatre." It is a sweet gig because, most of the time, I just get to sit back and watch the movie. (The film currently we are currently showing is entitled: "Humanity: nowadays mostly past and future.")

Sometimes the movie gets choppy, blurry, or even stuck. This is my call to spring into action. Often times, I notice the problem right away. But if I don't, it isn't the end of humanity. The theater has an automatic alarm that periodically gets louder until I notice.

I fix every problem by altering the film itself. And my only tools are a pair of plastic children's' scissors and scotch tape. I take the film and cut and paste frames until the movie is back to running smoothly, again. This is the part of my job that takes some skill. (Every time I alter the film, I rewrite humanity's past and future.)

I feel I'm getting quite good at what I do. I take pride in my work. But mainly for a selfish reason...when I 'm done with repairs, I don't want to go back to watching a shitty movie.

(note: This time he got a response. I've included it below.)

Sorry I asked.

(note: The boy sent one last email to this person:)

I'm glad you asked.

140

Details from an individual that claims he never dreams: After lying down, he quickly falls into deep sleep. An hour or two later, he wakes up suddenly and completely refreshed--bypassing the dream state, again. He claims he has slept like this for as long as he can remember. Other than reporting not being able to dream, the man seems to function the same as everyone else.

If my memory serves me correctly, many researchers agree that dreaming is tied to the process of memory. The commonly accepted theory is that our dream state does much of the work to assimilate our day's stimulus with previously stored information.

While researchers may in fact be correct about what is happening during our dreams, it does not follow that dreaming is necessary. And when discussing the content of peoples' dreams, burning *that* information into a brain is hard to term "vital."

The group of travelers often catch people "daydreaming." And many times they do something in order to awaken the others. Some of these daydreamers even claim to not like daydreaming. To these people, daydreaming is energy consuming, neglectful, and often stressful. They would like to be able to pull themselves out of a dream state, but the problem is that they often fall in without noticing. They find it difficult to recognize when they are dreaming so they cannot sound the alarm.

I think a major problem with recognizing the dream state is that it comes about in a subtle way. We slip into it slowly, with more and more of our awareness gradually shifting into a dream land. Further complicating things, we may never have been

totally awake to begin with. We merely assimilate shocking stimulus into our current dream-scape and carry on dreaming.

Yet most people *can* sense when they have been awoken. Falling into a dream may often happen unconsciously, but coming out of one is often too intense to ignore. It seems we do have the faculty to sense how asleep we were...after we are awake.

Can we wake up enough to sense when we start to slip back into a dream?

141

After months of grandma saying that she wanted to help Annie...yet refusing to help in a way that Annie appreciated...today she cracked. She has decided to comply with the help that was requested innumerable times. She is sending Annie enough money to fly her, the baby, and the guru back to England. Once there, the guru's disability status will support them. Their flight leaves in a few days.

All of grandma's previous conditions have disappeared. No longer is she requiring that Annie return to Minneapolis and check into a treatment center. Nor does she ask that she care for the baby while Annie is in treatment. She does not request that Annie start a career and settle down in a house to call her own. Gone are all the attempts to regain control over Annie's life...and gain control over the baby.

[I'm curious about your take on the grandma situation...From what the book has written, what is your opinion about grandma and her actions? How do you feel about Annie and the guru's interactions with grandma? Does it bother you at all that they could be seen to mislead grandma in an effort to extort her money? Do you think grandma was actually mislead?

The boy feels that Annie and the guru presented grandma with a situation more likely to reveal the truth than a "more accurate" depiction could. He thinks that grandma is the only one in self doubt; Annie and the guru were the only one's being honest about what they want. To him, grandma is the only one confused and misleading about true desires.

What is your opinion the boy writing his own viewpoint in an effort to lead your thoughts in a certain direction. Did you resist him with your view on a situation you didn't experience? Or did you let him analyze and write what he wanted in peace?]

142

The guru and Annie discuss the story of Puff the Magic Dragon. They also related Peter Pan by the reasoning that both are centered around the creativity of children. Children often dream of realities different from what is widely accepted. According to these stories, eventually the children leave that state of playful creativity and, in many versions, can never return.

The guru comments: "There is a truth and a falsehood to how we have presented these stories. The truth is that your childish state must pass with adulthood. There is a wisdom that is created and tempered by experience. Whereas, the childish state is largely ignorant of the pre-existing view of the world around them.

The falsity is that adulthood often implies that you can no longer be childlike. As an adult, you can still retain that playful creativity. There is a big difference in those two words: childish and childlike. The first is ignorant and playfully creative. The second is wise and playfully creative.

Enlightenment is about the return to a childlike state with the wisdom of experience. In that state, there is a remarkable ability to skillfully direct the play that is life."

143

The boy relayed some recent information to Ashnar: "So, it seems that Annie and her family are taking off to England, soon. They bought plane tickets and leave in two days."

Ashnar was silent for a moment, then she said, "Wow. That's quick...What are you going to do?"

"Well, I think I'm going to stick around Mexico longer. We already paid for the next few weeks on our apartment. Plus, I kinda like it here."

After a bit more discussion, Ashnar left to go do some painting at the beach camp. Later on that night, the boy had dinner with Annie, the guru, and the baby.

Annie asked the boy, "So, what do you think you will end up doing?"

The boy responded, "I don't know for sure. I want to stick around Ashnar for a bit...things are going surprisingly well. If I headed off for somewhere else, I think I would hate myself for it. This relationship doesn't feel finished...actually it feels like we are just getting started. I want to play it out to see what happens."

"Yeah. I agree. It is good to stay with things until you are sure it is time to move on...if you have the chance."

"I don't know...I could try and explain what I see in her, but I'm really not interested. I know I love her and that is enough for me. 'Why' is such a pointless question right now."

"Perfect."

"Exactly... I do have one issue, though. Ashnar has it in her head that she is going to keep heading south down the coast.

I wouldn't mind tagging along with her. But, she has already built up this image of ending up in Guatemala and living in isolated, small towns for the next few years...those dirt floor kind of places."

"Why the hell would she actually want that?"

"I think she has it in her head that she is going to travel for a long time. And she doesn't have a bunch of money. So she came up with this assumption that she has to live like she's poor."

"Ah, yes...of course. The poverty mind."

"Yeah. We've talked about this so many times before. And the problem is that Ashnar has built herself a romantic image to cover it up. It would be different if she actually had some experience with what she says she wants. But she is trying hard to convince herself that it would be great to live in these teeny villages in the middle of nowhere. Yet, I can tell that she loves things like good cheese, running water, and her friends back in the states way too much. If she ever got there, I'm certain it would wear on her. She would feel like she was in forced exile more than living out her dream."

"Oh, man. Yep. Yep. Poverty mind for sure. People just refuse to believe that they can actually have what they want. Even when everything is being offered, they feel they are unworthy to take it. They assume everything is going to be so difficult...that the outside world will not help. And that mindset prevents them from even *attempting* what they want."

The boy nodded in agreement.

Annie continued, "I used to see this all the time in India. We had a twenty-year-old servant for a while. She was really beautiful...but was in one of the lowest casts. Whenever we

talked to her about what she wanted, she just said that she hoped to be a good servant for a good house. She wanted to have a decent place to live and a steady supply of food. We would ask her if she wanted a house of her own...maybe a husband, kids...that whole thing.

She would pause for a while and then dismiss it. She refused to believe that it was possible. But, after three months of being around us, she had already turned into this amazingly confident and dignified woman. After we left, we got an email from her saying that she was getting married to a rich husband. He approached her when she was out buying food at the market one day. That sort of thing is supposed to never happen in India...jumping from the lowest casts to the top. But it did."

"Were you two having sex with her?"

"Oh, yeah. All the time..."

The two chuckled for a bit until the boy went to get a glass of water. He returned to Annie's bedroom and sat back down.

Annie continued, "People don't focus on what they want. They get so distracted. The trick is to do what you want right now. No hesitation. You must live spontaneously...focused on action happening within this moment. In that state, it is actually impossible to get into dreams about future success or failure. You are just immersed in what you are doing right now. Later, something may get in your way. However, you deal with that situation from the same mindset. You never stop flowing.

When you actually live that way, it feels almost effortless. But you can look back and you see that you did quite a lot. It is amazing to me to remember all the things I've done since I met [the guru]. And it is always surprising to me how well

things work out. Anything we need just seems to show up with the minimum amount of work, precisely when we need it. The next step just kind of magically appears. And usually, I find myself in a better situation than I ever could have ever imagined."

From the kitchen billowed the guru's voice. "YOU WILL BE SPONTANEOUS WHEN I TELL YOU!!!"

Annie and the boy laughed dismissively.

"BE SPONTANEOUS!" boomed the guru's voice, again.

Annie and the boy just laughed harder.

The guru came striding into the bedroom quickly. With his eyes bulging, he pointed a finger at the boy. "I'M SERIOUS!!! YOU WILL BE SPONTANEOUS RIGHT NOW!!!"

The guru strode out of the bedroom in a huff. Into the bedroom came the guru's voice, "NOBODY EVER LISTENS TO THE GURU!!! AND THAT IS WHY YOU NEED ME!!!"

The boy stopped laughing suddenly wondering if the guru could actually be angry. Then he glanced at Annie and the two both burst into laughter.

From the kitchen came, "THERE!...That's better!"

145

Today, the money from grandma arrived in Annie's account. At breakfast, Annie asked the restaurant owner how they could best get to the Puerto Villarta airport. The helpful restaurant owner responded that he knows a cab driver that will make the two and a half hour trip for 90 dollars. The owner made a phone call and set up the ride for his patrons at 4 pm that day. Then the group went home and prepared for the trip.

They finish packing about an hour after they started...leaving behind about half of their belongings. Their last few hours in San Blas are spent sitting around and chatting.

The final talk is about the next stage. Annie and the guru are done with publicly being spiritual teachers. In the pile of clothes to be left behind contains all their spiritual garb. They are closing down the guru's website and it is time to start anew. They will allow the next stage the space to develop however it wants.

The guru believes there are spiritually aware beings on this earth that spend their whole lives creating practices, meditations, or other structures. These creations are motivated by an honest effort to aid spiritual seekers in finding freedom. But the guru hypothesizes that these teachers must already know or will eventually learn they can only provide a halfway house. They welcome spiritual seekers when what is sought can never be provided. Graduation day is when the student leaves, realizing all that was learned is no longer needed.

But there is another kind of guru. The kind like the giddy, old man portrayed in this book. These gurus do not create

teachings or structure beforehand. The guru lives spontaneously with the student. If a temporary structure is needed, the guru creates it on the spot. All the while, the guru knows it is another thing they must leave behind. Two situations are never the same.

As a student, your choice is either to flow along in a dance of insecurity or run away in terror.

Annie recalled a story: There was a monk who had been bouncing around from monastery to monastery for the last ten years. He was on a search for a real zen master. That was when he ran into Annie. Annie told the monk that it was his lucky day. She actually knew of one that is more than willing to take on new students and gave the monk an email address.

The monk contacted the guru the next day and said that he would like to be his student. The guru's response was that he was welcome to come and live with everyone, but on one condition: The monk must quit the monastery. And the guru made it clear that he gave no promise to take the monk on as a student. The monk was never heard from again.

Here is the problem with people that say they want freedom: They will only leave their current cage if they think they can survive a scamper over to one that looks prettier.

After telling jokes for a while, the cab arrives. Annie, the guru, and the baby pile their stuff in. The boy and Annie give each other thanks for the lovely time together. The boy says thank you to the guru and the guru responds with a big hug. Seconds later, they are in the cab.

The boy yells at the cab's open window as they drive off, "Keep in touch!" The cab responded with the sound of an accelerating engine mixed with laughter.

148

The first night in the apartment alone, the boy ventures out on the town. He sits smoking and drinking a large beer in the plaza. Few people are out and about under full moonlight. After watching the scene mill about for a while, he heads to a bar for some celebratory food and another beer.

At the bar, the boy is approached by a lonely bisexual man he first met a few days ago. The man makes it clear he wishes to go to the disco with the boy. Before the boy can respectfully decline, the conversation is cut short by a cell phone call from the man's wife. The boy finishes his meal and excuses himself to go hunt for Ashnar on the beach. Instead, he finds her waiting for him right outside the restaurant.

"You ruined everything." The boy tells Ashnar as they walk hand in hand back towards the plaza.

"Ha. Of course." Ashnar said with a devious smile.

"I had everything figured out. I knew exactly what I was going to do. But then you came along and ruined everything."

"Oh? And what was your plan?" She questions playfully as they sat down on a bench in the plaza. There are about six other people from the beach camp nearby. The boy and Ashnar give a quick hello to the other travelers before the conversation resumes.

The boy explains as Ashnar hands him her beer: "I was planning to go to the beach and find you. But you weren't even at the beach! Now, I have no clue what to do."

"Well, I'm going to sit in the plaza and drink a beer. Wanna come?"

"Sure, I'd love to!" the boy responds emphatically.

During the wane of a brief chuckle, Ashnar and the boy each light up a cigarette. They overhear one of the beach campers talking about Peter Pan. The boy perks up and butts in boisterously, "What? Who dares speak the name 'Peter Pan!?'"

The server from the beach camp turns to the boy and responds smugly, "Well, what Peter Pan do you speak of? From which book...or which movie?"

"Oh, a bit of an expert, I see..."

"I love Peter Pan."

"Ok then. What do any of the versions mean to you?"

The expert takes a short moment's pause and says matter-of-factly, "There exists a world of dreams that people can exist in. And the inhabitants of that world are dreamers."

"And who are these 'dreamers'...is anyone able to become one?"

The expert rolls her eyes upwards and exhales. As she blinks, her gaze returns to the boy. "Well, I suppose that some people are born dreamers. And sometimes people are lead by a being...such as Tinkerbell. And others are kind of forced into it. In one version, Captain Hook comes to our world and steals a loved one. This forced a guy to give chase into the world of dreams. But, even though he was in the land of dreams, he still wasn't a dreamer. For example, this character couldn't figure out how to eat. He had to learn how to imagine food and only then did it appear for him. He had to learn how to dream in order to survive in the dream world."

"If you are a dreamer, can you go to Never-Never land whenever you want?"

"Well, it depends on the version. I like the versions where you can."

"Interesting."

There was a pause of silence and then the expert questioned the boy, "What do you know about Peter Pan?"

"All I know is that the author killed himself."

"Who was that? Hemingway?" The server challenged smugly.

"Hemingway wrote Peter Pan? I didn't know that! Wow, it has been a pleasure talking to you. I feel like I've learned so much." The boy said even more smugly.

Any retaliation to the boy's snide remarks were pre-empted by someone announcing a nearby block party. Everyone quickly decided they all should attend. But, one in the group was on crutches, and this party was at least ten blocks away. While the others discussed transportation, Ashnar leaned over to the boy as he smoked contentedly. "I thought you were going to go into some long-winded, existential interpretation of Peter Pan."

"Oh, I could offer one...even though I don't know much of the details. I didn't know that the story was rewritten so many times. All I saw was a cartoon movie once, when I was little. I didn't read any of the books. I piped up because I'm more interested in this mythological 'expert' character than any of the ones in Peter Pan."

The boy took another drag of his cigarette and found some more words. "In my expert opinion, experts are in the business of analyzing conflicting renditions or interpretations...they do so in an effort to create an elaborate interpretation they can call their own. Even if all the information comes from other sources, experts spend so much personal energy building this interpretation that it seems 'personal.' It is often so

personal that, when the interpretation is challenged, the expert's emotions depend on the outcome of that challenge. The expert feels pride if it somehow withstands the challenge. Another outcome might be that the expert feels insulted if their interpretation is not allowed to be heard. Or if the challenge stumps the expert, they might react as though they are afraid...their blood starts to rush...they can even get angry and defensive...just as if they were under physical attack...as if someone with a knife has backed them into a corner.

So important is the success of their interpretation, that after every difficult challenge, the interpretation must be bolstered. Experts will immediately go to work to find a sufficient counter attack to the threat. True experts will not rest until this is done. When experts discover the counter-attack, they have an 'ah ha!' moment and are ready to charge back out into debate."

The boy paused and continued on again. "Often times the opportunity to counter the threat has kind of passed. Hypothetically, take two people arguing at work. One makes the other's confidence waver. The dejected one goes back to his office space and replays the whole thing in his head...over and over. Yet, let's say, the expert can't come up with a good response to the threat until on his way home from work. But then he finally has that 'ah ha' moment in the car. Now he wants to counter attack but the co-worker is not there. He will replay the event within his head, to friends, family, other co-workers, a bartender, a dog...anything in this guy's vicinity is bound to get the whole play-by-play...amended with the newly discovered details, of course."

The boy took another drag of his cigarette. Ashnar began to say something but the boy cut her off quickly. "You see: experts love to marshal their mind through routinely traveled paths of logical argument. And when someone else disturbs that procession, it causes the expert's mind discomfort. Things go haywire. The expert mind tries to get back on path as soon as possible."

The boy paused again to smoke. Ashnar looked as though she was mulling over the boy's rendition of experts. He could tell that she was beginning to tire of this conversation. He moved in closely and whispered to sucker her attention back to him.

"An expert really gets off on discussing his theory to other people. If they are listening, he is directing the other person's mind along his path. Burning his string of reasoning into their brain. He owns the listener's thoughts. The expert gets off on power...the more eloquent, energetic, or seductive the expert is, the more attention they command. And the more attention during the transmission, the more controlling the expert is."

Ashnar leaned away from the boy and gave him a suspicious glare.

The boy switched to a devious tone: "The really dangerous experts are the ones that can communicate to the masses. These know all about common human tendencies and emotions. The really dangerous experts are the ones that know how the mind works."

The boy extended his arm and made a sweeping gesture across the plaza. "These experts are the ones responsible for everything you see here."

Ashnar was now looking at the boy as if he was crazy. He chuckled a little and pretended he was changing the subject by

returning to his normal calm and familiar voice. "So, back to Peter Pan." He took a puff of his cigarette to fain a disconnect in thought.

Ashnar's defenses went down as she adjusted her position on the bench, "God, you're weird." She shrugged off her discomfort with an exhale of her cigarette.

The boy smirked smugly and said with a sarcastic voice, "The reason I didn't go into some long winded, existential debate about Peter Pan is because real experts know which battles to walk away from."

Ashnar looked at the boy exhaustedly. Then she got up and started to walk over to the other people from the beach camp discussing the block party.

The boy yelled at Ashnar's back, "That is just what I would have done! Heehehehheh!"

Experts love getting the last word.

** Even multiple times

[You are being programmed, right now. Beware!]

Yep. Sure thing. Gotcha. Definitely. OK. No problem. Thanks. Love you. Right on. Word.

150

Ashnar, the boy, and a couple of people from the beach camp stand around the plaza. They await a decision on how to get to the block party when a pickup truck suddenly pulls up with four people in it already. Someone yells, "Come on. We've got a ride!"

They all pile in and pass jostling beers around as they speed down the cobblestone roads. After a stop at a liquor store and some more wear on the suspension, the ten or so party goers arrive at their destination.

The block party turns out to feel like a small carnival. There are about two dozen rides, some games where you can win those stuffed animals, and a bunch of food carts. The new arrivals stand around passing beers while taking in the scene.

Ashnar is glowing. "I love Mexico...piling ten people in a small pickup with blown speakers blaring...winding up in a carnival that is squeezed in a one block radius...all the rides look as though they are going to fall apart...transvestites and dust...beer all around with no bathroom."

The boy comments, "Let's go on a ride."

The two select the most rickety looking one. It is called "El Dragón." Eight rows of three-person benches, parallel to each other, form the deck of a ship. The ship swings back and forth like a pendulum similar to those metronome things that keep beats per minute for musicians. Whether you have the picture of it in your mind isn't all that important. The thing was a blast to the two love-birds. Events on the ride include banging on the security gate to pretend some sort of vital pin

broke, pulling a coat over the eyes to require riding blind, pretending to loose bladder control, watching multiple foreign objects bounce around and rain on top of the other riders, and grabbing crotches for added excitement.

The two agreed they selected the best ride at the fair.

As they walk off, someone asks the two, "How was it?"

The boy responds, "Total scam...it is just designed to shake change out of your pockets. We had to keep our hands on each other the whole time to keep things from flying out."

The boy looks at Ashnar with raised eyebrows. She responds by giving him a punch in the arm.

He says to her quietly, "What, they all know."

"Oh, I know. I mentioned that you might be moving down to the beach soon. They gave me shit for it. They said we might have to give us the "lovers cabana," since it has a little more privacy. They also joked about it being a bit unstable. I sat through a half hour of them discussing what they will put up in its place after we cause it to collapse."

"I'm happy to give them something to talk about. We could even put on a little show for them..."

The boy got another punch in the arm.

At the Mexican carnival, the closest bathroom consists of a bucket on the floor behind a curtain two blocks away. After Ashnar and the boy relieve themselves, the boy returns to the rest of the beach campers. Ashnar continues on to hunt down another beer. The Peter Pan expert approaches the boy, "I can't believe that you haven't learned Spanish."

The boy says flatly, "I know enough. I can order beers and say 'do you have a boyfriend?'" The boy's eyes light up a

little, "I suppose I still need to learn, 'Will he be gone long?'"

The boy got himself another punch in the arm.

The expert adds, "Around here, you need to learn: 'How old are you?'"

"Nah, 14 to 74, it doesn't matter."

"You're terrible...Dirty."

(no punch this time)

"I prefer the word 'honest'"

At this time, Ashnar returns to the circle. The expert tells her, "He's a bad man. He just told me he'd fuck kids and grandmas."

Ashnar shrugs, "I'm a bad girl."

The boy adds: "And that is why daddy needs to punish her."

The expert shakes her head as she walks off. By her body language, it is a bit unclear if she has anywhere to go except 'away.'

Ashnar turns to the boy, "Daddy, I've been good today. Haven't I? Can I have a treat?"

"Maybe later when we get back home, sweetie. Mommy will be mad if we spoil your dinner. I told her we'd be back by seven...[the boy checks his wrist as if he has a watch on it]...We'd better get going or else daddy will be in trouble. You know she gets worried when we are out too late. She'll think that we are being naughty."

"Ok, but promise you will tuck me in?"

"Of course. You know how I love to say good night to you."

"Thank you, daddy."

"Love you, sweetie."

The two chuckle as they start the walk back to the boy's apartment.

Ashnar lights a cigarette. "Now you've got me in a crazy mood."

"I love it."

"You love everything. You'd probably even love to eat my eyeballs after I'm dead and scull fuck me."

Ashnar goes on to paint various other morbid fantasies. One involves the boy being stuck in a remote monastery with a bunch of nuns married to Jesus. Another includes licking boots after walking through a hundred rooms of pestilence. And others incorporate whips, chains, and over-sized toys.

The two are clearly excited with only three more blocks to go. They finally reach the front door of the boy's place and grab a beer. They sit on the front balcony taking sips while the boy smokes a cigarette. Ashnar goes to the bathroom and comes back out. As she returns she says, "What is it you want right now?"

"Sex." He responds.

"What is it you want?"

"Sex."

"Then take what you want."

He leads her to the bedroom and they form various positions. After hours, he cums deep inside her.

They pant for a minute or two together before Ashnar says, "I love it when you cum in me. You have no idea what it does to me."

The boy laughs at Ashnar's attempt to term what they just experienced as 'private.' "I love it when I cum in you. You have no idea what it does to me."

The two are soon drifting off into grinning sleep...

152

Ashnar and the boy wake up early in the morning. He made some coffee and they sit in bed drinking together. She spends the next half hour playing with his testicles and watching them in wonder as they adjusted to temperatures. "This is the coolest thing I've seen in years." She looks up at the boy, "Is it ok that I'm doing this?"

"Of course. I love it."

"I just can't believe I have a man, all to myself...here...that I can just play with."

"You can do anything with me. Just do what you want. I honestly don't think you can hurt me. If you want to do something, I won't judge that. Go ahead, play with my body. I know it can be just a body. And you can pick my brain, too. Any question you want...I joke around a lot, but ask me a serious question and I will attempt a serious answer."

"I've grown to like your jokes. It is just sometimes they seem...I don't know...condescending?"

"Yeah, I can see that. I'm very critical. But I'm critical of myself only. I see the potential for all of us to live something more loving...and beautiful. My critique is of the current resistance to a more blissful state. I direct that critique towards others just because it is easier to see. Like when you use a mirror to look at yourself. But all the while, I am commenting on myself. My own dream. Everything.

I don't feel like I judge people when I use them for humorous purposes. I just like to play with words. I play with the fact that people can rarely communicate with words. Words

to me are pure folly. I enjoy trying to make that obvious. Confusion is enjoyable to me...it brings us all back to a starting point with opportunity for something new...and it just happens that other people usually don't enjoy that, too."

"But sometimes words work."

"Right, right. Let me put it this way. I cannot tell you anything you don't already know."

"I think I understand why you say that...but don't you think that you can still talk to someone about something they don't know?"

"Absolutely not."

"What?...If that is true, that rocks my world."

"I say that you cannot know what you don't know. Simply because you don't know it. So, you can't even talk about it. If you try, you are merely labeling something known as unknown. This also means that you can't even hear about what you don't know...sure you can hear the words, but you won't understand what they point to. These words will either point to nothing or will be redirected to something the listener already knows."

"Ok, I think I get what you are saying. But, I still think there are things I don't know."

"But how would you know for sure?...Ok, lets back up...Maybe there is confusion with semantics... What is it 'to know?'"

"Um...I don't know."

"Heheh, well now we're stuck. We've been talking on and on about knowledge and we don't even understand what each other implies by the word. This is why I like words. We could have debated for years and never understood what the debate was about. Hehehehe...Ok, but I bet you *do* know. People claim to

not know a lot of things. But I think almost everyone knows more than they think they do...

Ok, I'll get you started. As I choose to express it, the common word "knowledge" involves two different ways to know something. One is the process of thinking about something...explaining...a form of expression of your current state. This is where all the information you can study falls...physics, philosophy, psychology, religion, etc. They didn't exist before humans. This knowledge is our creation. They are our descriptions...products of our imagination...our ideas...our forms of expression."

"Ok. Ok. I got it."

"Just making sure we are on the same idea...stick with me. So, you can know a description of the sunset--like the way the sun moves around the earth...the interaction of the light on the atmosphere. Or, the eye and it's process of perception. Or you might be able to elaborately describe the colors. But how much can you know with only the description? For instance, if you were always blind, what would a description of a sunset do for you?"

"Not much. You need the experience. You need to see it for yourself."

"Definitely. It is possible to only know *about* something...knowledge of a particular form of expressing whatever *it* might be...an idea of it. Like the blind man who knows about a sunset...

And then there is the thing itself. The *it*...being part of the experience as it happens...witnessing it...seeing a sunset for yourself... That is the other kind of knowledge. You know it because there it is...right before you...plain to see.

Later on, you may choose to describe it...express that experience somehow. But you can never get a blind person, who wasn't in the experience of seeing a sunset, to experience something by just describing it. No matter how good your description; there is no way for that person to really know what he doesn't know."

Ashnar retorted, "But, the blind man can know that he doesn't know. You can tell the blind man that he doesn't know the experience of seeing a sunset."

"Yes, but that is the first kind of knowledge. It is just another idea...a description of what the blind man doesn't know. He is still left with only knowing about it...he doesn't know it...the experience of it. So, he still can't know what he doesn't know. If he knew what he didn't know, he would know it. Understand? Now matter how many people tell him about it. He will always be limited to knowing about sight. He will never experience sight simply because he cannot."

"Ok, but with our limited perceptions, can't we say for certain there are things we can't experience? Things that are unknown?"

"No, that is another description. You are creating the idea of unknowns and turning them into mental knowledge. You are placing a label on some concept that you know...it is confusing because it is a misnomer...you call the concept you know about 'the unknown.'"

"So, there is no unknown?"

"That's what I'm saying."

"What? If that is true, that rocks my world."

"Hehehe, yes...everything is already known. And you can prove it for yourself. In a pure experience without thought,

everything in the universe is there. A complete knowing experience of everything, everywhere, and for all time.

In an experience, we may choose to pick at it...describe it...chop it up into ideas. At that point, in thinking about it, we place ideological confines on the experience. This is why our descriptions...our mental knowledge is always incomplete. This is why science, philosophy, and religion are all endless inquiries. You can trace everything to big bangs, tiny particles, and black holes. And as many have pressed the know-it-alls: What was there before the big bang? What caused the big bang? What are fundamental particles made of? Can we get matter to absolute zero? What happens to the stuff after it goes into a black hole if information is neither created or destroyed. Or, if we decide that things are created and destroyed...how are they created? Who or what is this creator? And if you think you know the answers to any of these questions, how would you prove it to someone else conclusively?

Questions are endless until a mind gives up asking questions. To have a true answer, the questioner must die. If you want to know everything, kill the questioner. Kill the seeker. Throw out all your knowledge. And then...simply see what happens."

Ashnar sat up in bed. "But, I don't want to disappear. I still want to question. I still want to experience this world. I still want to play around...poke at things. I don't want to die."

"Who doesn't want to die?"

"Who?"

"Yes, who doesn't want to die?"

"Who?"

The boy sat up. "I'm asking you." Ashnar fell silent. He paused and then pressed further. "Is it possible this person that doesn't want to die isn't even the real you?"

"Well, I know that. That is basic. There is the real me that is everything. And then there is this other me that wants to experience this world."

"And what you just said is confined to the land of descriptions. The first kind of knowledge. Let's go at it this way: Is it possible that the person who doesn't want to die was never alive anyway?"

"What? I keep it alive. It lives in me. It isn't the real me, but it is this temporary expression of me."

"Is a description of a sunset alive?"

"Huh? Well...I don't know. I suppose it is if I gave the description life. If I describe something, that description lives in me."

"Ok, so you are saying a description is 'alive' when it is in someone's imagination?"

"Well, I wouldn't use those words. But I suppose..."

"If you agree with my description, now we have two kinds of life. Just like we had two kinds of knowledge. One life is the description in an imagination, the other is the one that makes imagination possible."

"Oh man...this is exhausting."

"There is no end to questioning... So, now we have two kinds of life. Is it possible that only one of them is permanent--and in that sense--real?"

She sighed. "Ok, Ok, the description dies when it leaves the imagination." She paused, "But the ability to imagine also dies when the person dies."

"One person can't take ownership of being able to imagine. Aside from all humans having the exact same faculty, everything...at least since the big bang, let's say...is necessary. The earth, the sun, the stars, the entire universe as it exists right now...all of it (and everything that got it here) is necessary for one person to be able to imagine anything. This ability exists as part of the current situation. You cannot discount any portion of the situation that makes the experience possible. No person can say, "I am solely responsible for my ability to imagine."

"Nobody has sole ownership of their imagination. Fine... But I'm lost. What's the point, again?"

"Nobody has sole ownership of the *ability* to imagine...My point is: There is no end to questions...until the questioner dies."

"Ok." Ashnar got up and went to get more coffee.

On her way back to the boy's bedroom, she notice the apartment was strangely empty. "Did they leave?" she asked.

"Yep, yesterday."

"Strange. There is nothing left behind but an ashtray with two cigarette butts."

"That is how they are. When it is time to go, they just go. I don't know if I will ever see them, again. I have no home address for them, no phone number. And I'm almost certain that they will change their email addresses, too. I wouldn't put it past them to change their names. They just disappear to re-emerge in some new situation...surrounded by new people... It's nice though. This way , they can give birth to entirely new characters and new stories. Crazy Clouds...that bunch."

The boy added, "Oh...Annie left some clothes from her old costume behind for you."

In a small pile on the table lied a black cotton dress, a green silk dress, three white long-sleeve tee-shirts, and a hair clip. Ashnar began to try some things on. She removed her extremely small "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" tee-shirt and went for the black dress first. It was a little too big and kept falling off her petite shoulders.

The next character was one wearing the green silk dress. She looked at herself briefly and started to complete the ensemble with focus. She laced up her black boots and then tried on her well-worn, black stocking cap. Her head didn't seem to fit the dress. She laughed hard at the picture of her split personality laughing back.

She addressed the boy through the mirror. "You don't understand. I've never owned any clothes that cost more than 5 dollars."

"Well, that 400 dollar dress is free."

"I guess I feel awkward because I never dress like a woman. It is so strange." She took the dirty stocking cap off and put the hair clip in. It's simple design matched the dress well. The reflection in the mirror giggled back at her. She covered her mouth in an expression of exaggerated shyness. The reflection blushed a little and then broke out into hysterical laughter.

After the laughs subsided, Ashnar was taking a good look at herself from all sides. "This just doesn't seem like me at all. It looks like I'm pretending to be someone clean."

"Maybe you were pretending to be someone dirty before."

"I think you are right."

"I can't tell you anything you don't already know."

"Oh, god. More guru talk?"

"Exhausting. Isn't it?"

Ashnar sighed. "Yes."

"You look beautiful." Ashnar watched as the boy's reflection entered into the mirror and kissed her.

155

[After typing for three hours, the next song on the computer is entitled "A Well Deserved Break." So kids, that concludes our show for today. Will the guru and Annie disappear in to the eternal void? What adventures await our two lovers? Is the banana bread in the fridge still good? Tune in next week for the exciting conclusion!!]

157

Ashnar and the boy chatted late outdoors on a cool night. After finally making their way into bed, the two spend a half hour with each other's hands in armpits, between legs, and under asses until they warmed up. Over the next hour, the boy ran the back of his hand all over Ashnar's body with varying pressure while she lay completely still.

There is a certain magic to touch. But, the magic is only accessible with the proper attention. Proper attention I can only inadequately describe as a relaxed, continuous, and complete attention. Or, I could maybe more accurately define it as: something you will know you have done after you have done it.

I use the word "magic" because the toucher and the touchee feel pleasure at the same time. That may sound obvious, so I will attempt to imbibe my descriptions with more "wow." The toucher does not need to be told what is pleasurable by words, moans, or other body language. He or she knows by simultaneously feeling the pleasure directly. The concept of giving or receiving pleasure no longer applies. All that remains is a sharing of increased or decreased pleasure.

How deep into a touch is it possible to go? How thoroughly can you let yourself forget that two bodies seem separate? Deep in a touch, where are you? Deep in a touch, can you even ask, "Where am I?" Does questioning automatically detract from the experience?

Perhaps asking questions means we don't have proper attention?

It seems I am still fascinated by the sheer endlessness of the questioning mindset. My mind is spirals into toying with implications...It is amazing to watch.

Inquisitors Anonymous?

The current chain of questions brought me to the subject of analyzing dreams. Then my mind transitioned predictably over to psychiatry. I suppose delving into your dreams and your past may provide some insight into a person's issue with who he or she is. But these types of analyses strike me as potentially never ending treatments. I see no end to dream analysis without ending dreams. I see no end to digging up past memories until there is only now. I'm struck by a belief that psychiatrists are great for taking you apart in little pieces. But I don't think they have any idea how to put you back together again.

Therapy Patients Anonymous?

Self-helpers Anonymous?

159

There is a popular video game available called "The Sims." In this game, you create and control an individual character, called a "Sim." You send him or her to work, take care of bodily needs, maintain a home, establish relationships, etc. If you actually play this game, you can watch your self become emotional towards the character you control. For example, you may get a feel good high when your character gets a promotion at work or improves a relationship with another Sim. You may feel down when your character's house gets robbed or doesn't succeed on something or other.

I have spoken to a few people about this game. When I explain the concept, some of them respond that the game sounds "silly" or "stupid." And they wonder why anyone would want to play such a game. At this point, I usually agree that the game is a waste of time, and we drop the topic. But, I like to change the subject by asking this person, "So, what is new in your life?" Usually, they respond with an update with their progress with work, bodily needs, living situation, relationships, etc.

And at this point, I usually refrain from saying that his or her life sounds like a silly, stupid waste of time.

161

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Beautiful is an ugly word because it cannot convey beauty. --

Manflesh

--

Message from the boy:

Oh, my god folks. It is now my third day after moving out of the apartment and down to the beach. Three big days. So much has happened. I just feel the futility in trying to recount any of it. But, I'm surely rejuvenated. I've got some wind in my sails. And I'm happy to be sharing with you now. Let me go into the logistics of today: I had a great breakfast of "nearly chicken" sandwiches with Ashnar. Then we rode bikes into town and had a great two-hour cup of coffee. Next, we headed back to the beach where a small family fiesta with a hired band was taking place...they were celebrating the birth of a new child.

Over these past three days, Ashnar has not done any work on her job of repainting the bathroom. Today, she explains she feels inspired and gets cracking. After she disappears into the womans' bathroom, my mind turns to the prospect of typing in our little tree-house. (We live in a raised palapa, underneath palm fronds and some highly appreciated bug netting.)

I strut to my car to grab my computer, some apple juice, and cigarettes. And I haul everything up the little wooden ladder to our bed...plug the laptop in...turn a little fan on...adjust the fan just so...turn the computer on...situate the cigarettes and apple juice...wipe the sand from my feet...climb under the bug netting onto the bed...take all my clothes off...set the laptop on my lap..and watch the screen as it fires up.

I light a cigarette and think to myself, "Wow, where to start?" At that point, this urge to shit comes out of nowhere and it demands "NOW". Hahaha...perfect. Put the pants back on...climb down the ladder...find there is no toilet paper...go back to the car...get my spare roll (another highly appreciated item)...and head back to toilet. While I'm doing what I need to do, someone bangs on the door every ten seconds. I reply loudly, "Uno Momento!" Each time, the door responds with more knocks after the short duration. The urge must have struck someone else as quickly as it did to me.

I finish up as quick as possible...head back up the stairs...take my clothes off...and produce this. Ha. A pause. The artist's paradox...the mystic's paradox...reality's paradox: Knowing every word is just a shadow of what prompted it...always lagging behind.

(The boy lights a cigarette...takes a puff...then types about lighting a cigarette and taking a puff.... All the while, the boy knows The Book will never experience that cigarette, knowing The Book is only a shadow of what was. The boy continues to type about knowing this book will not know that it doesn't know that it can't know. Another puff of the cigarette...the boy casts another shadow of that cigarette and watches as it appears on the screen before him.)

I'm brought back to the three big days that inspired this writing. I recall how I have written nothing during these three days. I see how I have already included everything I can from these three days.

At this point, Ashnar shows up. "People keep trying to use the bathroom when I'm trying to paint. It is so disheartening... am I disturbing you? (The boy's typing lags behind the conversation. He thinks about what came next, oh yea:) "I am, aren't I," she says.

The boy responds, "In fact, your not at all. Right now I'm typing, 'I am, aren't I. She says. The boy responds, In fact, your not at all.' You are quite the little muse." Ashnar laughs, and then lights a cigarette. The boy types...umm....what did he type then?...too late...such is the paradox of The Book...always lagging behind.

The boy put the computer down, and they smoked a cigarette together. The boy read aloud what he typed today...Ashnar shows she enjoys it. They note again that everyone is trying to get to the bathroom...everyone has three days of shit in them...everyone wants to get it out now.

The boy chuckled when he realized his joking analysis was actually true for him. He remembers taking a shit in his old apartment just before he moved down to the beach. He literally had three days of shit in him that he got out today.

Also, everyone seems to be faced with a little delay in getting their shit out. The boy had his delay with his writing, the person banging on the bathroom door had to wait impatiently, and Ashnar had to set aside her painting project.

These little delays that may frustrate...or be called "disheartening"...could just as easily be described as

perfection. The boy's spontaneous urge to poop resulted in a playful couple of pages that he enjoyed writing, the person waiting at the bathroom door would not have had toilet paper without the delay, Ashnar would not have had had the enjoyable cigarette and conversation about this writing.

(Doomed attempt to catch up: Ashnar has since gone back to see if the bathroom is open. Somehow the boy suspects it must have been unoccupied due to the fast rate that he is typing this.)

Oh, my god, life is amazing. Fuck, it has been a wonderful three days.

The boy pauses in front of the screen for a few minutes. He listens to the band start to play two notes of a song and then stop. Next, the band plays four notes of a different song...then they stop...the band discusses what to play...the keyboardist sends out a couple of organ notes...then silence...then more discussion. The boy continues to listen to the band not knowing what song to play. He imagines Ashnar in the bathroom, paintbrush in hand, contemplating where to start. He stares at the blinking cursor on his computer screen, ready to go. The world seems to be, as Ashnar once said, "Fantasizing about future imponderables."

At the same time that the boy begins to type the above paragraph, the band begins to play; and somewhere down below, the boy pictures Ashnar's brush painting away.

He finishes the paragraph above and lights a cigarette as the band closes their song. There is some clapping for the band...the boy gives the first exhale...and somewhere down below Ashnar is dipping her brush with a smile.

162

A few days ago, the boy got the question...again...

"So, who are you?"

The boy fumbled a bit for words, while trying to explain how he felt at that moment. Given the benefit of responding in writing, he might have replied something like:

"I'm just a dog barking at the moon that was born in a spider web so big it seems as though I may roam...and I love to play...impervious to the spider watching me...wiping it's eye every 29 days."

163

Today, for some reason, a thought about money comes into the boy's head. It struck him as a strange topic. Aside from watching Dow Jones Analyst's reports change weekly from seeing a recession coming, to being in a recession, to coming out of a recession; finances has not been on his brain for quite some time. Now, all the sudden, the subject jumps up without any other related thoughts.

He goes over his financial status in his head. He has a bank account that should be around \$300 positive. Also, he has two credit cards that have been timely paid each month. Sure, he is reaching the end of his credit line, but that is still thousands of dollars away. The next monthly payments will take the bank account down to about \$150 but he has a few weeks until they are due.

So, he can determine no immediate financial trouble, plus he is too damn happy to view any sort of binary representation of inked paper as "dangerous." ... Yet he still feels compelled to go down to the internet shop to double-check.

First, he looks at both his credit cards. Everything is in good standing...just as expected. He checks his email...nothing there. Lastly he looks at his bank account...uh oh, it is at \$150...negative.

He does some investigation to see what happened. Ahh. There it is...Earlier in the month, he emailed his roommate requesting that a \$450 check not be cashed. To compensate for the check, he suggested the roommate keep a piece of electronic

equipment worth \$600 and a few other things. The rent check was cashed yesterday and bounced. Ok...mystery solved.

The boy decides to remedy the situation by going to the cash machine, taking a cash advance on a credit card, and wiring the money to his bank account. But the credit card says he has insufficient funds. Something is going on here. It is time to test this financial situation out...explore it's nature.

He emails his parents explaining his situation and asks them to wire some money. The boy laughs to himself a bit. Let me explain the humor:

The last five years or so, his parents always gave him a present for his birthday. They felt like they had to give him something, despite the boy's statement each year that he didn't want anything. His words wouldn't suffice so \$150 dollars was always timely sent his way to end the obligation.

Just months ago, it was the first birthday the boy could recall where his parents didn't give him any money. He speculates they decided against it because they didn't want to support him quitting his job and skipping off to Mexico. But, this year was the first time he actually needed some money...and asked for it...and the first time his parents refused. So, the account unexpectedly ends up 150 negative. The exact amount he asked for.

To the boy, this is nothing but an interesting situation...money again forces things to move along. He and Ashnar have about \$250 dollars in their cumulative pockets and cash advances from the credit companies is unexpectedly not possible. He leaves the internet shop to find Ashnar and discuss the future.

The boy is typing all this down back in the palapa when the computer screen begins to wobble before him. Ashnar is walking up the stairs. Time to stop writing...time to explore this moment...and see how Ashnar is involved.

[This little event brings up the interesting topic of "signs"--that is, looking at your surroundings in a symbolic way to glean insight. To the boy, sometimes there are seemingly strange things that happen in the world. He knows all these events can be explained away easily (often by calling things merely coincidental.) In this case, the boy could have seen a simple miscommunication with his old roommate as trivial.

Seemingly strange or unexpected occurrences can promote unique thought. They force people of their current mode. Unique thought can lead unique places. The boy's wheels are turning in a way they wouldn't without the money mellow-drama.

Wonder if the desire to know "what happened and why" might just be avoidance. When presented with an unexpected situation, why is there a scramble to uncover the story behind it? Why couldn't the boy just see his account was negative and directly move onto finding money to fix it? Why did he have to rack his brain to get the story of how the account became negative? All that search really did was possibly cause some disappointment towards his old roommate and delay dealing with the negative account.

Now at this point, The Reader might be creating reasons why the boy is justified in uncovering the story. Was this you? "Perhaps the bank made a mistake and the boy would have to call the bank's attention to it...perhaps someone was making unauthorized charges and the boy would need to take some action to prevent further fraud...perhaps whatever."

If you found yourself searching for justifications like these, do you recall the first few chapters of The Book? Remember the Message to the Reader #1 and 2? You have not let this book exist in piece as it is. You have been battling with the book. So let me ask you, was your search for justifications merely a way to avoid dealing with the book? Perhaps the book is an unexpected situation--just as the boy's negative bank account was to him. And you racked your brain for an explanation to ease the discomfort--to return to the feeling that you know something. I would like to note that only after that reconciliation were you able to focus on reading further. Your questioning may merely be an avoidance of new possibilities. And that avoidance might be nothing but a time out for a freak show of mental gymnastics.

Perhaps my discussion of my thoughts on all this is merely a delay in writing the story. Oh, my! Do you see how we can go round and round with endless explanations? Discussion about what really is happening is a bottomless pit. And as I type about the bottomless pit, I realize we are still going. And on and on we can continue. Help! I'm still going!! Yikes!!! Let's move on!!!!]

...

Back to your memory of the boy's memory of his discussion with Ashnar: He explained the strange financial issues that happened to him. Ashnar wondered how this ordeal affected his plans for the future.

The boy felt that he still didn't have any real plans, but he is getting an itch for something new. His financial situation just gave him a quick reminder of his impending bankruptcy...and sparked some ideas.

He went through his version of the options: He has no foreseeable income for a while. His last book keeps getting turned down by agents and publishers. Income from any writing would be a long way off (even if he did get something published somehow). He can't count on getting hired by his old employer because the necessary security code generator was attached to a set of keys he lost. It would take weeks to get a new one...plus he hates that job. He really just wants to spend time with Ashnar and write a little.

If he doesn't do something soon, he is going to be broke in San Blas. No money to eat. No money to live. No money to leave. He and San Blas need to go their separate ways. He needs to find a way out. And there is not much time to delay.

--- Delay

Ashnar talked with the owner of the beach camp, today: The owner explained that she views the camp as if it were "The Truman Show" (a movie where the main character learns he has lived his whole life on the set of a television show). Travelers sporadically arrive on her movie set...aka her beach camp. She watches, each day, as the travelers reveal more of their character. Sooner or later, each traveler gets uncomfortable as they sense something is fishy about their time in, what seems to be, paradise. They start to wonder what exists outside their little beach camp world. And the owner gets to watch as each of these travelers search for their unique, hidden-door to escape.

--- Go!

So, the way the boy sees it, he is going to soon lose the last few thousand of his available credit. The monthly payments are due shortly and he can't guarantee he will have the cash to make them. If he doesn't use this credit, he sees it as an opportunity lost.

[Sorry, sand in the keyboard from the bottom of an apple juice carton. Hang on.....Ok]

He asked Ashnar if she had any ideas of what they could spend the money on. Now, the moment he said this, an idea of what to buy struck him...but he was still open to alternatives.

Ashnar looked at the boy a little strangely, "what we want to buy?"

"Yeah, us. Like I said, I see this situation as an investment. We don't know the future, but if we want to leave options open, we should act now."

"Is there any way that we could buy stuff and get cash for it? I don't really need more stuff."

"I don't know of any way to do that easily. And, I still think that I might be able to get some cash out of the cards. So, think in terms of what you can buy now that you will probably use. For example, I'm going to need a good backpack, some walking shoes, a tent, sleeping bag...all the basic hobo gear. Just in case I end up homeless and broke. And you can get whatever you need. If you end up not needing it in the future, then you can sell it. There are always traveler types around that can use the staples."

"Ok, so we take a trip into Tepic to find a department store?"

At that point there was a rather loud restaurant patron in the parking lot outside the cabana. He was talking on a cellphone for some time and was starting to raise his voice. Ashnar whispered to the boy, "I want to see who this guy is."

As Ashnar and the boy adjusted their seating position to listen in better, the boy comments, "Maybe he's talking to someone from 'the office' about a paper that didn't get filed...I wonder who's fault it is."

The two smiled to each other and concentrated their attention down to the parking lot. Up from amidst the cars came this voice:

"Well, I don't know...the yellow house?...You will have to ask Joanne."

A delay...

"No, I'm in Mexico right now...On this tour group thing."

Audible footsteps from pacing back and forth. Another delay...

"Well, I don't know what the problem is. I'm not there. I can't tell you what to do!"

Ashnar and the boy both turned to each other quickly. Ashnar beat the boy to the punch line, "But, here comes the ten minute speech of what you should do..."

Sure enough, an even more frustrated voice from down below says: "The problem all started when we switched from Real Management to Pool-Pro. They installed a new pump and things have been fucking up ever since. I've had them out there at least three times and they never fixed it right...No, no...what you've got to do is: go to the little fuse box next to the pump..."

no, no...the...I don't know...it's a fuse box...a little...grey...argg...you at least know what a fuse box is, don't you?!"

Ashnar and the boy looked at each other with faces that expressed, "Ooo."

More pacing down below. A pause...and then "No, just cancel that fuckin' contract! Pool-Pro is horrible! Call up Real Management and have them come out."

From the other side of a parking lot came a scream, "Don't you go canceling anything on me!"

"Oh, don't listen to her. She doesn't know what the fuck she's talkin' about."

Ashnar and the boy practiced their giggle masking yoga.

Pause...and from below: "Just cancel it...Hello?...Hello?...FUCK, this fucking phone won't hold a FUCKING charge!"

This was just too much. At this point, the man was stomping back to the restaurant and the two lovers just let the laughter out.

The boy chuckled, "I need a cigarette after that one."

Smiling Ashnar replied, "I am so glad we got to hear that. That was precious."

"God, you have to wonder about this show, don't you? I mean come on...The guy's is all pissed about a swimming pool pump. Then his wife chimes in, and they are ready to go at each other. On top of that, the guy's cell phone goes out right when he's really pissed. That is so scripted."

"Don't forget that this couple is busy enjoying their vacation."

"Yeah, who rights this cheesy shit?"

Ashnar gave the boy a suspicious grin. The two smoked together until the boy resumed, "Ok, we make a trip into town then?"

Ashnar nodded.

"Start thinking about what you want. I am not going to need \$4000 worth of stuff. So stock up. Whatever you want. This is an investment... Also, there has to be other ways to use the money we aren't thinking of... Like a plane ticket somewhere."

Ashnar paused. "I'd rather have something I can turn into money. And I wouldn't really want a plane ticket somewhere far away. I don't want it to be a big expense to get back to Mexico."

"Well, the tickets would be round-trip. You would just pick a departure date, in lets say a week or two from now, to someplace...like India or somewhere...and you'd set a return date however many months later. Then, if you need to change the return date, you just pay a fee to change it."

Ashnar perked up, "India? You would do that?"

"Of course. I love being with you. And if we decide to go separate ways, you can either go to India alone or just chuck your ticket in the trash."

"India.... hmmm... Did you know that I've had dreams about India ever since I was a little girl? The smells...the colors..."

"Ok, then first we go to Tepic in the next few days. Second, we need to look into plane tickets to India or somewhere else...No, wait...First, I need to smoke a cigarette; second, we need to go get more beer; third, we have fun tonight; fourth, we need to take a trip to Tepic in the next few days; and fifth, we look into plane tickets to India."

A delay...a couple puffs of a cigarette...then the lovers eyes met.... It was one of those looks. Wish I could tell you more about it. Such is the writer's paradox.

After a long stare and a few more puffs on their cigarettes, the lovers' look had ungodly amounts of excitement in it. It was more of a burning than a look. One could go so far as to call it the passion of life itself--the unborn, unknown, and immortal in the birthing process of a new experience--spawning new possibilities from what could simultaneously be seen as destruction. There is an infant future beginning to be presently remembered.

[I wish I could share more about this feeling. Look around you. Perhaps you can find it here, too?]

167

One evening Ashnar and the boy strolled around town. They saw a parade of ants streaming along side the road, extending for blocks. Each little ant going in one direction was carrying part of some flowering plant. Empty handed ants marched in the opposite direction. The two streams essentially occupied one path. At each collision, antennae rubbed together. The troop moved quickly despite taking the time to communicate with nearly every ant encountered along the way. Out of the thousands visible, only two ants strayed off the beaten path.

Further down the road contained a different scene. In the town square, hundreds of small crows were sitting in three different trees, calling to each other.

Ashnar commented, "Animals seem joyous."

167.5

Ashnar asked the boy if he had an addiction:

The boy responded, "Well, I could tell you that I don't have any right now. But that doesn't really mean much. For example, I used to be addicted to thinking and I didn't know it for a time. If you asked me the same question back then, I could not have told you, 'I'm addicted to thinking.' There was no way for me to admit it. I couldn't make step one in Thinker's Anonymous."

"Ha, right."

"When I was younger I seemed to know more. I would ask myself things like, 'Why do I need to tell myself what this flower looks like?' That process just struck me as so odd...or at least unnecessary."

"Why unnecessary? How else would you think about something?"

"Ok, sure. I was confused...but I'm just trying to explain my situation back then."

"Yep, gotcha. Carry on."

"So this was the gist of the confusion: I'm looking at a rose, and then this commentary always came in. But for what? Why is this voice trying to tell me about it? The description never told me anything good. Just stuff I already knew. Stuff I could already see for myself."

"Ok, I think I get why you were flummoxed."

"Good word... So, I remember thinking how ridiculous this thinking was. And I wanted to see if there was a way to make it

stop. But as I grew up, my attention went to school, sports, popularity, and girls...of course."

"Of course." Ashnar gave the boy a flirty look and a kiss on the cheek.

"I just forgot about the issue. But even when I was young, I didn't realize how important to me this issue was. By the time I entered college, almost my entire day was spent in thought. And the world was just endless mental games. I saw the world as chess."

"I like chess."

"I like you." The boy gave Ashnar a kiss on the cheek.

"So what brought you out of this constant chess?"

"Well, I started to realize a common theme. Somehow it dawned on me that everything I truly loved was more fully experienced when the constant chatter in my head stopped. The awe of beauty, freedom, playfulness, causeless joy, connectedness, peace, spaciousness, sex, and all the rest. Everything I loved to experience was so much more vibrant the less I thought about it.

That is when I set out on a real search for the 'off' button to my thinking. I wanted more control over that idiot in my head that kept blabbering. And that turned out to be difficult for me. That blabbermouth quickly adjusted and made shutting up the new topic of conversation. He could read book after book about meditation. He could talk about the inexpressible nature of reality into the wee hours of the night. And it struck me again that he was just building up a repertoire of spiritual knowledge. It was the same chess game. And I still couldn't shut him up. That was when I remembered I was an addict."

"Are you still an addict?"

"Good question. Just the one I was thinking, in fact...I may be. I still think a lot, if you haven't noticed"

"Oh, really?" Ashnar says with copious amounts of sarcasm.

"But, I guess I don't see it as a 'problem' so much anymore. If I did, then I would be addicted to thinking I'm addicted to thinking...Thinker's Anonymous."

"Yikes."

168

Ashnar describes her addiction:

"For me, I would say that my addiction has been to pain. I've had so many accidents...and a bunch of broken bones. I had three different braces on my body at one time...from my head to my ankle. And they put me on these intense painkillers, but nothing ever really got rid of the pain. For almost as long as I remember now, I have been in pain. At one point, I started mixing painkillers with alcohol...every day. During this time, the doctors would tell me how amazing my recovery was. They couldn't believe I was going on hikes and riding my bike in the mountains for miles. They just didn't understand how I could do it. But to me, it was simple. I never let pain prevent me from doing what I wanted. I just put up an badass façade and they bought it. But, the whole time I was fucked up off god knows what and in agony."

"How did you come to know you were an addict?"

"Well, if I didn't have anything to occupy my time, my attention always turned towards my body. I spent a lot of time looking for pain. It gave depth to my life...it was rich...real...I guess I couldn't say that about much else. I realized I couldn't stop looking for pain. I was obsessed."

169

I recently overheard a discussion about the story of Jesus washing his disciple's feet during "The Last Supper." The conversationalists were convinced that Jesus was performing this act symbolically to teach something. What exactly was being taught was open to debate.

The small discussion group wound up coming to an agreement about the lesson that day. It started with the premise that the disciples were dirty (sinful) and in order to be cleansed (of their sins) they must submit to Jesus (their savior) washing them clean.

Here's another take: Jesus was a "master" only because his disciples thought of themselves as his "servants" or "students." This relationship is purely role play, but at least some of the disciples did not understand the difference between them and Jesus is fictitious. Jesus plainly knows that he is no better than anyone else. He switched the roles to illustrate that he had no qualms about being a servant. Yet he knew they would have qualms about playing Jesus' master. The foot washing event was to bring the one sided limitation to the foreground.

Jesus also suggested his disciples wash one another's feet. They were to take turns playing master and servant to each other. Once they learned to accept either role with the same person, maybe they would see that the social hierarchy is make believe.

There is nothing special about Jesus. This was Jesus' whole point. His disciples saw him as somehow "more holy" than

them...and anyone else. Only they didn't know the reason he had that attribute is because they pretended he did.

Note that I have no qualms speaking for Jesus here. Even by his own words and actions, we are equals.

Manflesh Last Supper Meditation # 5:

- After a lovely evening with your partner, retire to somewhere comfortable.
- Have your partner lie on his or her back while blindfolded and completely naked.
- Tell your partner that he or she is forbidden to move at all.
- Sexually arouse your partner however you wish. You may need to be creative in order to keep you and your partner focused on the event.
- Any suggestions by the submissive partner back must be in the form of "Please Master, will you ____."
- If your partner gets close to orgasm, then stop.
- Do not let them climax for at least 30 minutes. After that, let them climax if you wish.
- Switch roles and repeat.

Manflesh Last Supper Meditation Questions #5:

- Were you able to accept both roles equally?
- How about your partner?
- If not, try the meditation (or your own variation), again. See if you two can get better at falling into character.

- Did you see how both of you must be in character for the relationship to exist? Was it clear that you cannot have a master without a servant or vice versa?
- If you didn't try the meditation, why not? If you don't have a sexual partner, give hand massages, take turns making dinner with someone, or think of some other way. Don't give me excuses. I am playing the master now. Take my orders. Carry them out. No need to fret, later you can go back to disregarding what I say.

Manflesh Last Supper Mediation Shazam #5:

- What prevents you from assuming a role you normally do not? What is this source of discomfort?

170

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Have you ever noticed the urge to piss or shit and then kept doing something else? People can live their whole life like this...never realizing there is a different way to go about things. -- Manflesh

--

Today after breakfast, Ashnar decided it was a "lay on the beach and read" afternoon. She went over to the camp bookshelf and pulled a few books down before selecting a paperback. Her face lit up when she handed a book to the boy. The front cover was worn to the point of being illegible. He flipped it over and read the back.

It was a science fiction story: In this version of the future, birth control had been so effective that all of mankind has been sterile for the last 15 years. However, there was a new girl in town. And she claims she is eight years old. What could be her secret?

Ashnar grabbed the book from the boy's hands and headed towards the ocean. The boy turned to the bookshelf. He had checked this bookshelf a few times before--finding nothing of interest. This time, there were two new additions to the collection that caught his eye. One was Emerson's "Nature" (and other writings) the second was "Memoirs of a Geisha." He pulled Emerson off the shelf and was reaching for the second one when

he noticed it was written by Arthur somebody... by some guy the boy surmised. His hand stopped as he thought, "How does some guy named Arthur end up being an authority on a Geisha's life? By studying Japanese culture at Yale or something and interviewing one lady?" He determined Emerson was a safer bet.

The boy went out to the beach with a chair, a coffee, the book, and some cigarettes. He took his shirt off, lit a cigarette, took a sip of coffee, and started on Emerson's headlining essay, "Nature." It had a nice opening about every human life being a personal empire. The point might have been that no matter what you do with your life, it is your life--your universe. It gave the boy a feeling of inspiration. Then the boy recalled, "Oh yea, Emerson's an orator." He imagined Emerson before a room full of wide-eyed college kids on graduation day. The grads were sitting with an erect posture; each was building up their own vision of what their inevitable world domination would look like.

Next up for our hormone filled audience was a description about what Emerson meant by the word 'Nature.' The boy paid more attention to the style than the content. The lovely prose, the mastery of the English language, the cleverly worded analogies, and the ability to end trains of thought that make people hungry for more. This speech had been given before. It was impeccably crafted and polished to a fine sheen.

But the boy quickly lost interest. No doubt, this was a great speech...but he felt like Emerson might as well be giving a speech on how to make pancakes. He could see the reviews: Emerson's 'On Pancakes' would be heralded as "a revolutionary piece of American literature." "Emerson exemplifies the spirit of the American dream that built this great nation." "'On Pancakes'

sagely trumpets a deep appreciation of simplistic truth...the timeless essence of everyday life."

This was the first time the boy had read anything by Emerson. He made it all the way to page 8. The boy wondered if anyone else who read Emerson could be as cynical as he was. Over and over Emerson was saying to the boy, "Stop reading. There is exactly nothing in this essay. Go play outside or something."

He closed the book and watched the waves come in. (another sip of coffee. another cigarette.) The sun continued to fall on his skin, and he glanced at his shoulder. No visible burn. But his skin felt that kind of warm that indicated it was time to find shade. Just enough sun...just enough Emerson. The boy chuckled as he thought, "One of the lucky ones, I guess."

The boy walked back to bookshelf to give Emerson it's proper resting place. He picked up "Memoirs of a Geisha" and opened it to page one. In the first paragraph, a character said something like, "Today was the best day of my life and the worst day." Then the book went on to anticipate the reader would ask, "Well, which one is it? It certainly can't be both."

The author was incorrect in his assumption. If the boy could have responded for himself, he would have replied, "Of course, what other kind of days are there?" He closed the book and put it back on the shelf...realizing that Ashnar already had the best book available.

The boy laughed at how his cynicism is burning as strong as ever. And how this attitude does not play favorites. His trigger was remembering that he was writing a book...what his cynical mind then saw as a pile of self-contradictory fluff,

bullshit, and predictions of reader reactions...but without any polished style. His next thought was to go do some writing.

He headed for the cabana and got the computer out again. Just after getting situated, he had to take a shit. Time to go back down the stairs and to the bathroom. Here's one he had fun with:

"On Shit"

by the boy

Today, nature called.

As I sit in my bed, I feel my abdomen contracting on its own. I sense a second set of muscles holding my shit in. This strikes me as symbolic of a common dichotomy--the body with its simple and satiable desires, the human will with its learned methods of delay and prevention.

As I search for an open shitter, I marvel at the human will in its quest for sanitation...sanctity...sanity...

This time, the force of human will did its job--nature is successfully prevented from being natural. My body is made to wait for the male toilet to become unoccupied. So strong is this will that I hardly notice the female toilet is a viable option. My will obscures the realization that the only functional difference between the two is the presence of a urinal that I do not need... Chalk up another success to human will as nature is suppressed until I remove my nature-covering garment off behind closed doors.

This shit is ridiculous.

Again, inside my body, I feel the desire for expulsion. I relax those handy muscles that kept my trousers clean...but nothing happens. Human will has prevented nature for too long. The old will is obsolete...now a waste product...nothing but shit.

But wait! This problem can be solved by a little push. Human will is the answer! Oh, thank you human will! If I had discounted you so easily, just think of the shit I would be in!

This time, little effort was needed on my part. The shit is quickly on the move. It was a bit on the dry side, which I deduce from a slight scratching sensation on the way out. But my body begins to rejoice, nevertheless. As the first chunk of fecal matter begins to drop, I realize the will to shit is no longer needed. The body takes control. There is a relaxation into the tension around my stretched asshole. Even the once heroic will to shit has become unnecessary shit.

On the toilet, I sit in awe of our limited perspective. Perhaps all human will is merely a waste product of humanity's suppression? Do we not see our quest for answers began when we created questions? Are we truly on an endless cycle of self-created solutions to self-created problems? One must ask, is there anything in life but this repetitive shit?

I relax further as I allow the last bits of fecal matter to drop. I think, "Oh, yea. That's the shit." Next to drop are all my thoughts. The human will created by shit is now seen as shit and allowed to be shat. No more desire...no more questions. My body rejoices as the

tension in my abdomen and head dissipates. I finally allow myself to be as I am. I have realized my true, natural self. The ultimate experience. Liberation from the shit though the shit.

And I know, any attempt to express this moment will be nothing but more shit.

172

Over the last few days in Mexico, Ashnar and the boy planned the details of getting to India. They came up with the following list:

To Do:

1. Plane tickets to somewhere in the USA where they can get a tourist visa for India
2. Plane tickets to India and somewhere else 6 months later

A short list for planning a 6-month trip to India? Sure. But this is the beauty of it. There is a sane way and a common way to plan for something in the future. Let us go into it.

The sane way to plan something:

1. Get struck by an idea for the future that sounds great
2. Start thinking about what needs to happen to make it so
3. Start doing those things
4. Take care of problems as they arise

Now, the common way to plan something:

1. Get struck by an idea for the future that sounds great
2. Start thinking about what needs to happen to make it so
3. Start doing those things
4. Take care of problems as they arise

Do you see the difference? You have to look closely. The difference is crucial! It is the the key to success...and

happiness! I'll give you a hint. The difference lies in steps 2 through 4.

173

Ashnar and the boy went to an internet shop one afternoon. They sat down and looked for Indian Consulates within the US. Chicago came up first. They decided quickly it was as good as any other city. Next up was finding plane tickets to Chicago. They found a decent price on a flight 3 days in the future and booked it. Next, they found a flight to India...leaving after a few day layover in Chicago to help ensure they get the visas in time. They book the flight with the return date to Chicago 6 months later.

And that is how to plan a trip to India in about an hour. Ashnar and the boy celebrate their amazing life navigation skills over food, beer, laughter, and sex.

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Among the other beach campers, word got around quickly of our lovers' trip to India. Most of them commented with something like:

"I wish I could just pick up and leave for India." or

"I want to go." or

"It must be nice to have that kind of freedom." or

"India? What's in India?"

174.5

More on the sane way to plan something:

In their final days in Mexico, the two lovers didn't talk about how to pay their bill at the beach camp. They didn't think about what to do with the boy's car. They didn't talk about schedules. They didn't discuss what needed to be done in Chicago. They didn't brainstorm about needed supplies. They didn't dream about places to go in India. They didn't worry about the fact that they have only a few hundred dollars of cash between each of them.

Instead, they spent their final days enjoying Mexico, food, beer, laughter, and each other.

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More on the common way to plan something:

After being struck by a good idea, the prevailing tendency is to picture what life would be like if that idea became a reality. This perspective is of an imaginary image of "self" in a fantasy world. The more mental energy, through intensity and/or duration, the more elaborate and detailed the dreamland becomes. Intensity also serves to solidify that fantasy in the mind.

Next, the mind turns to the present situation and compares. With each comparison, there is an analysis of how the current situation must be altered to realize the fantasy. Usually, the more elaborate and solid the fantasy, the larger number of things that need changing is. Added to this difficulty, the fantasy often includes a picture of future happiness. Now happiness depends on success, which adds pressure. Planning becomes more than planning. Planning is crucial.

The mind, under pressure, starts to see alternate scenarios arise. It knows plans rarely go according to plan. Here is where "what ifs" become abundant. The mind begins to churn on all ways the plan can fail. Fear of failure is now part of the plan.

With each imagined failure scenario, the mind wants to ensure against those failures. The "to do" list grows. Even though the common way to plan now assumes failure, it might not necessarily make for a "bad" plan. But the plan now assumes that success in the person's life and future happiness will be

difficult. The person is fearful, defensive, and a combatant against a world from which they seek cooperation.

During the course of taking action, things often don't go according to plan. The plan is often discouraged. And since the plan is seen as under attack and in need of protection, it is not easily changed on the fly. This causes a small roadblock that could have been easily and creatively worked around to snowball. It may be quite some time until it becomes obvious the plan must be altered drastically.

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More on the sane way to plan something:

Ashnar and the boy's flight to Chicago leaves from Puerto Villarta late one night. Puerto Villarta is about a two and a half hour drive south down the coast of Mexico. The two decided to deal with the boy's car by driving down early with a "for sale" sign stuck in the window. Maybe they could get lucky and someone would pay cash for it on the spot.

They got all their stuff packed up in the morning and enjoyed one last cup of coffee on the beach. After saying their goodbyes to everyone, they piled into the boy's car. The boy sat in the driver's seat, with the key in his hand, and exclaimed in a booming voice, "After dispelling numerous demons in the sleepy town of San Blas. Our two young Warriors of Light jump into their chariot headed for parts unknown. What will become of our beloved heroes? Whatever happened to that banana bread? Tune in next week for more adventure!!"

As the boy turned the key, the car responded with, "Wha-cah-cah-cah-chah-chah-chah."

The boy turned the key off with a chuckle. He tried again. The car responded, "Wha-cah-cah-cah-cah-chah-chah-chah."

He looked at Ashnar with amazement. "Who writes this cheesy shit?"

It took ten minutes for the boy and Ashnar to stop laughing. And that makes all the difference.

Closing Letter

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Science, philosophy, religion, and spirituality are all in the same business: They provide descriptions for previous experience. -- Manflesh

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You cannot learn anything from any thing. This book, like anything else, is just a thought in your head. Your thought, your creation. Your thought cannot tell you anything you don't already know.

For example, if you have been searching for peace and joy for years. I can tell you to try setting aside your quest for one month. Just to see what happens. After years of searching. Why not try taking a break. Just one month. Isn't it worth a shot?

It would mean, at minimum:

- No more spiritual books or quotes.
- No more spiritual practice (yoga, meditation, mantras, prayer, etc.)
- No more experiments, conversations, or thoughts about:
 - What is real
 - What is the mind
 - Trying to find a right answer to "why" or "how"

But I cannot tell you to do this experiment. All I can do is suggest that you try....but, if you try it, you are doing a spiritual experiment. You would necessarily fail my experiment.

If you want to learn, want to change...or want to try anything...you will always fail. That is how it is.

The same reason that I cannot tell you to do this experiment is why you will get nothing from any spiritual practice. It is the same reason books, lectures, religious teachings, mantras, meditations, yoga, and the entire gamut of jargon all do exactly nothing for anyone. These create seekers not finders.

This is why I cannot tell you anything. I am a creation of your current mind that helps it put into words what it currently thinks it knows.

...of course, I cannot tell you that I am your mind.

[If you search for, or even determine, the validity of that last statement: Where did your inquiry take place?]

Much love,

The Book

P.S. If you get caught thinking about this letter, just remind yourself that everything in this book is completely pointless, meaningless, and useless. It is merely thought loops of what you already think. And, not especially...but equally pointless, meaningless, and useless is this P.S. Also, just as completely pointless, meaningless, and useless is writing about the completely pointlessness, meaninglessness, and uselessness nature of anything.

This is a spiritual book. This is what a spiritual book is.

This is spirituality.

Pointless, meaningless, useless exercises in futility.

Disagree, agree, analyze, remember...

And that would be pointless, meaningless, useless.

Do you understand?

Postlude

"The Lonely Cabin"

by Manflesh

A 20-year-old girl was wandering through a pitch-black forest. She had been lost in these woods for many days. Exhausted one night, a faint orange glow in the distance caught her eye. She wondered, "Could it be somebody's home?"

But as she turned and walked towards the light, it became more and more faint. Finally, it disappeared completely. She stopped walking and looked around. Where had that light come from?

She was snapped out of her pondering by something smack in front of her face. An old cabin! She had nearly run right into it without noticing!

The cabin was falling apart from neglect. But it had a somehow familiar, warm appeal. The girl entered cautiously through the open front door. Her eyes adjusted slowly to the small, single room within. It looked like nobody was home.

Inside, in the darkness, she saw the outline of a lantern sitting on a kitchen table. She picked it up and gave it a shake. To her surprise, it felt full of fluid.

The girl reached into her pocket for her lighter. She prayed it still worked. It had been many days since she last used it on her final cigarette. Thankfully, it fired on the first try.

She applied the flame with care and slowly the old lantern took. The cabin filled with the same orange glow that had led her there.

The girl walked over to the bed and sat down atop the dusty blankets. She intended just to relax for a bit but flopped over asleep within seconds.

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The next morning, she awoke to the sound of birds chirping. The sun was still low but it lit the cabin intensely. For a while, she thought she was back home. The girl rubbed her eyes and looked around. As her eyes turned to the lantern on the table, she remembered...lost...wandering in the woods...the old cabin.

She got out of bed and explored the cabin. There were strange paintings on the walls. They looked like a child had made them. There was one of dark woods. One of the outside of the small cabin. And one of a fire burning in the fireplace.

There were pots and pans in the kitchen, but no food. She found some extra blankets in the only closet. An old rocking chair sat empty facing the fireplace. Oddly, on the windowsill, rest a shiny golden harmonica.

In the afternoon she surveyed the outside of the cabin. There was a pile of already chopped, old firewood in back. It felt dry to the touch. Also, she found a small creek nearby. She took some wood back into the cabin and set it by the fireplace. Then she took a pot down to the creek and gathered some water. On the way back, she nearly dropped the water pot with excitement. She had stumbled upon a huge blueberry bush teeming with fruit.

She approached the bush and picked one. She studied the small berry in her hand for a moment and then quickly put it in

her mouth. The flavor was amazing! She shoved one after another into her mouth. Soon her chops were so full that she couldn't fit any more. She slowly chomped down a few times; the juice running down the side of her chin. Each time she swallowed, she sighed contentedly. She picked dozens more and put them into the pot with the water. Before she left the bush, she picked another three and popped them in her mouth.

The girl was still happily savoring the taste in her mouth when she got back to the cabin to start a fire. Next, she hung the pot of blueberries and water above to boil. Then she grabbed the harmonica and sat in the rocking chair contentedly. Soon she was sipping on blueberry tea and watching the fire as night began to fall.

She spent many days at the cabin regaining her strength. The blueberry bush was always full. In the evenings she sat by the fire and played the golden harmonica. She spent so many days like this that she had almost completely forgotten about her former life. One night, she suddenly remembered...the city, her apartment, her job, her friends, her family...

The next morning, she awoke knowing it was time to leave. She straightened up the bed and put the harmonica back on the windowsill. After one last visit to the blueberry bush, her pockets were filled and she started on her way. She took a few steps and then turned back.

She went back inside the cabin and picked up the lantern. She gave it a little shake. It felt strangely full...she never remembered turning it off.

She set the lantern back down on the table. She giggled a little as she reached into her pocket—trying not to squish the blueberries. She headed back out into the woods with a smile;

whistling a strange tune. Back in the cabin, her lighter lay on the table next to the lantern.

...

Since then many years have past. The girl is now an old woman. She spends most of her time sitting on her porch, whistling a strange tune...and drinking blueberry tea. (Most everyone thinks her crazy.) Every once in a long while, a curious passerby stops to chat with her. And she always tells them the same story—the story of the lonely cabin.

Here is how the story ends:

"If you ever get lost, there is a lonely cabin nearby. But! ...there is a secret to finding it. Yes. Yes. Yes... And the secret is this: you must remember, 'you are the cabin.'"

And she pauses for emphasis and then repeats, "YOU ARE THE CABIN."

She mumbles to herself while nodding her head, 'yes. yes. yes.'

"If you can remember the secret, then, do you see?... You can light the lantern inside...And then...*trust*...you must *trust* in that lost soul out there! If you are patient, your self will find you...your self will find you."

She nods mumbling, 'yes. yes. yes.'

She continues to nod her head. It seems as if she is checking her story for validity. She turns to look you in the eyes, "And *that*, my friend, is the only story I know."

About the Author

Manflesh was born. Subsequently, his entire career has been in the field of pharmaceutical research. His life's work is research and development of a refined placebo. Accomplishments include: writing this book.

He likes cheese...Oh, and as always, feel free to send money. (You can use Paypal to deposit however much you desire into this email address: sgriz@yahoo.com)